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Wappin' Wharf

Darrell Ross

Wappin' Wharf

A Frightful Comedy of Pirates

By
CHARLES S. BROOKS

with pictures by
JULIA McCUNE FLORY

music by
GORDON HATFIELD

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WAPPIN' WHARF
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Wappin' Wharf

CHARACTERS

THE DUKE
PATCH-EYE
THE CAPTAIN
RED JOE
DARLIN'
BETSY
OLD MEG
SAILOR CAPTAIN
THREE SAILORS

SETTING: For details of Stage Set turn to pages 35-6-7.

A PROLOGUE TO BE SPOKEN BY BETSY

Our scene is the wind-swept coast of Devon. By day there is a wide stretch of ocean far below, and the abutments of our stage arise from a dizzy cliff.

The time is remote, and ships of forgotten build stand out from Bristol in full sail for the mines of India. But we must be loose and free of precise date lest our plot be shamed by broken fact. A thousand years are but as yesterday. We make but a general gesture to the dim spaces of the past.

The village of Clovelly climbs in a single street — a staircase, really — and it is fagged and out of breath half way. But far above, on a stormy crag, clinging by its toes, there stands a pirates' hut. To this topmost ledge fishwives sometimes scramble by day; but when a wind shall search the crannies of the night, then no villager would dare to climb so high.

You will seek today in vain the pirates' cabin. Since the adventure of our play a thousands tempests have snarled across these rocks. You must convince your reason that these pinnacles of yesteryear, toppled down by storm, lie buried in the sea.

We had hoped that our drama's scene might lie on a pirate ship at sea. We had wished for a swaying mast, full-set with canvas — a typhoon to smother our stage in wind. We had hoped to walk a victim off the plank, with the sea roaring in the wings. But our plot deals stubbornly with us. Alas, our pirates grow old and stiff. They have retired, as we say, from active practice and live in easy luxury on shore. Yet we shall see that their villany still thrives.

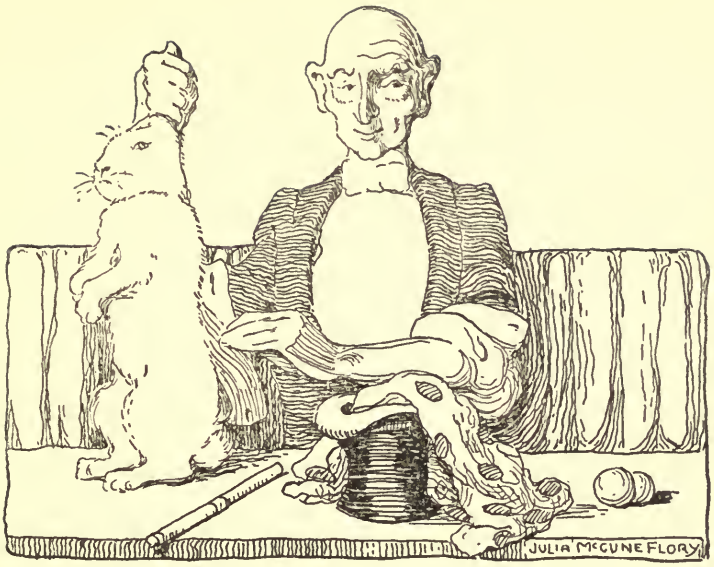
How shall we select a name for our frightful play? There is a wharf in London that is known as Wapping. In these days that we call the present it has sunk to common use and its rotten timbers are piled with honest unromantic merchandise. But once a gibbet stood on Wapping Wharf, and pirates were hanged upon it. It was the first convenient harborage for inbound ships to dispose of this dirty deep-sea cargo. So it was the somber motif of a pirate's life — his moment of reflection after he had slit his victim's throat.

Tonight, although your beards grow long and Time has marked its net of wrinkles — tonight, the years spin backwards. Only the young in heart will catch the slender meaning of our play.

We are too quick to think that childhood passes with the years — that its fine fancy is blunted with the practice of the world. Too long have we been taught that the clouds of glory fade in the common day. If a man permits, a child keeps house within his heart.

Our prologue out-stays its time. Already the captain of our pirates puts on his hook. The evil Duke limps for practice on his wooden leg. Presently our curtain will rise. We shall see the pirates' cabin, with the lighthouse in the distance, Flint's lantern and the ladder to the sleeping-loft. We shall hear a storm unparalleled — thunder, lightning and a rush of wind, if it can be managed.

Then our candles burn to socket. Our pasteboard cabin grows dark. The blustering ocean, the dizzy cliffs of Devon, melt like an unsubstantial pageant. Once again, despite the signpost of the years, we have run on the "laughing avenues of childhood."



BY WAY OF EXPLANATION

SEVERAL weeks ago an actor-manager requested me to try my hand at a play for the winter season. The offer was unexpected. "My dear sir," I said, "I am immensely flattered, but I have never written a play." Then I hastened to ask, "What kind of play?" for fear the offer might be withdrawn. He replied with sureness and decision. "I want a play," he said, "with lots of pirates and—no poetry." He stressed this with emphatic gesture. "And at least one shooting," he added. It was a slim prescription. He left me to brood upon the matter.

The proposal was too flattering to be rejected out of hand.

After a furious week upon a plot and dialogue, I was given an opportunity to display my wares. The manager himself met me in the hallway. "Is there a shooting?" he asked, with what seemed almost a suppressed excitement. I was able to satisfy him and he led me to his inner office, where he pointed out an easy chair. The room was pleasantly furnished with bookshelves to the ceiling. Evidently his former ventures had been prosperous, and already I imagined myself come to fortune as his partner. While I fumbled with embarrassment at my papers—for I dreaded his severe opinion—he himself fetched a basket of coal for a fire that burned briskly on the hearth. Then he sat rigidly at attention.

It now appeared that he had summoned to our conference several of his associates—the subordinates, merely, of his ventures—his manager of finance (with a sharp eye for a business flaw), his costumer and designer, and another person who is his reader and adviser and, in emergency, fills and mends any sudden gap that shows itself.

My notion of theatrical managers has been that they are a cold and distant race—the more sullen cousin of an editor. Is it not considered that on the reading of a play they sit with fallen chin, and that they chill an author to reduce his royalty? It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer. I am told that even the best plays are hawked with disregard from theatre to theatre, until the hun-

gry author is out at elbow. They get less civility than greets a mean commodity. Worthless mining shares and shoddy gilt editions do not kick their heels with such disregard in the outer office. Popcorn and apples—Armenian laces, even—beg a quicker audience.

But none of this usual brusqueness appeared. Rather, he showed an agreeable enthusiasm as we proceeded—even an unrestraint, which, I must confess, at times somewhat marred his repose and dignity. Manifestly it was not his intention to depreciate my wares. He exchanged frank glances of approval with his subordinates—with his costumer especially, with whom his relation seems the closest.

In the first act of my play, when it becomes apparent that one of my pirates goes stumping on a timber leg, his eye flashed. And when it was disclosed that the captain wears a hook instead of hand, he forgot his professional restraint and cried out his satisfaction. He was soon wrapped in thought by the mysterious behaviour of the fortune-teller and he said, if she were short and stout, he had the very actress in his mind.

But it was in the second act that he threw caution to the winds. As you will know presently, Red Joe—one of my pirates—seizes his trusty gun and, taking breathless aim, shoots—But I must not expose my plot. At this exciting moment (which is quite the climax of my play) Belasco—or any of

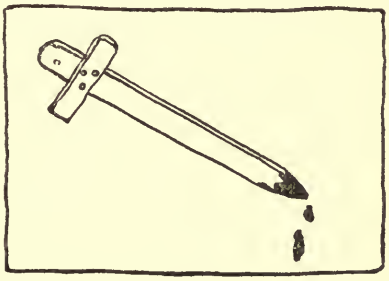
his kind—would have squinted for a flaw. He would have tilted his wary nose upon the ceiling and told me that my plot was humbug. What sailorman would mistake a lantern for a lighthouse? Nor were there lighthouses in the days of the buccaneers. He would have scuttled my play in dock and grinned at the rising bubbles. Mark the difference! My manager, ignoring these inconsequential errors, burst from his chair—this is amazing!—and turned a reckless somersault between the table and the fire.

His costumer, who knows best how his eccentricity runs to riot, checked him for this and sent him to his chair. He sobered for a minute and the play went on. Presently, however, when the enraged pirates gathered to wreak vengeance on their victim, I saw how deeply he was moved. His exultant eye sought the bookshelves, and I fancy that he was in meditation whether he might be allowed a handstand with his heels waving against the ceiling. His excited fingers obviously were searching for a dagger in his boot.

You may conceive my pleasure. If his cold and practiced judgment could be so stirred, might I not hope that the phlegmatic pit in shiny shirt-fronts would rise and shout its approval at our opening? And to what reckless license might not the gallery yield? I fancied a burst of somersaults in the upper gloom, and tremendous handsprings—both men and women—down the sharp-pitched

aisle. It would be shocking—this giddy flash of lingerie—except that our broader times now give it countenance. Peeping Tom, late of Coventry, in these more generous days need no longer sit like a sneak at his private shutter. He has only to travel to the beach where a hundred Godivas crowd the sands. I saw myself on the great occasion of our opening night bowing in white tie from the forward box.

Our conference was successful. When the reading of the play was finished and the wicked pirates stood in the shadow of the gibbet, he thanked me and excused himself from further attendance by reason of a prior engagement. Under the stress of selection for his theatre he cannot sleep at night, and his costumer wisely packs him off early to his bed. She whispers to me, however, that although he had hopes for a storm at sea and a hanging at the end, his decision, nevertheless, is cast in my favor for a quick production, whenever a worthy company can be assembled.



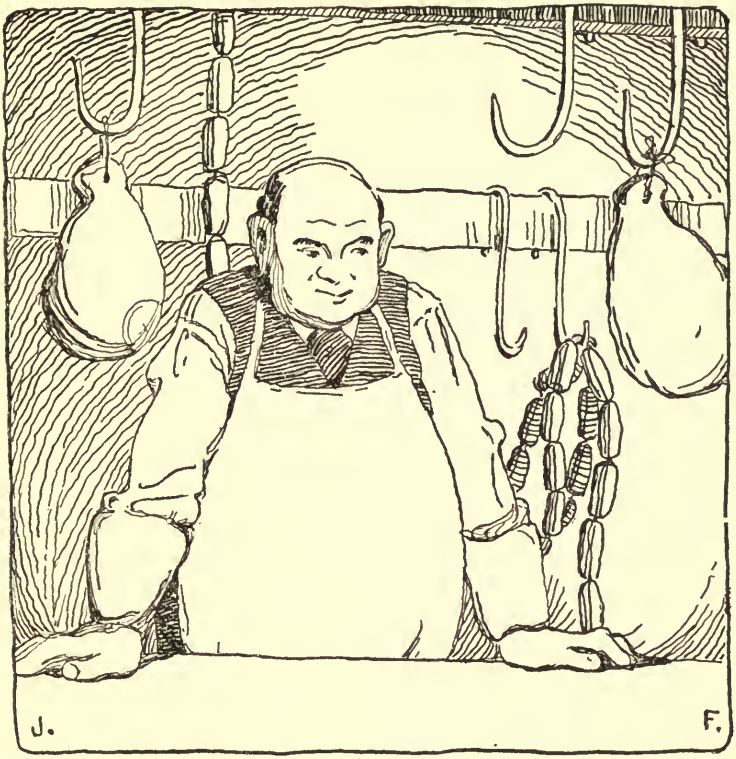
On the tip of each he has bargained for a spot of red

But we have gone still further toward our opening. The manager has already whittled a dozen daggers and they lie somewhere on a shelf, awaiting a coat of silver paint. On the tip of

each he has bargained for a spot of red. Furthermore, he owns a pistol—a harmless, devicerated thing—and he pops it daily at any rogue that may be lurking on the cellar stairs.

All pirates wear pigtails—pirates, that is, of the upper crust (the Kidds and Flints and Morgans)—and at first this was a knotty problem. But he obtained a number of old stockings—stockings, of course, beyond the skill of that versatile person who mends the gaps—and he has wound them on wires, curling them upward at the end and tieing them with bits of ribbon. The pirate captain is allowed an extra inch of pigtail to exalt him above his fellows. When he first adjusted this pigtail on himself, his costumer cried out that he looked like a Chinaman. This was downright stupidity and was hardly worthy of her perception; but ladies cannot be expected to recognize a pirate so instinctively as we rougher men. The stocking, however, was clipped to half its length, and now he is every inch a buccaneer.

As for the captain's hook, he is resourcefulness itself. These things are secrets of the craft, but I may hint that there is a very suitable hook in a butchershop around the corner. Surely the butcher—warmed to generosity by the family patronage—would lend it for the great performance. I have no doubt but that the manager, from this time forward, will beg all errands in his direction and that his smile will thaw the friendly butcher to



His smile will thaw the friendly butcher to his purpose

his purpose. Certainly two legs of lamb, if whispered that the drama is at stake, will consent to hang for one tremendous day upon a single hook. Our hook is to be screwed into a block of wood, and there is something about knuckles and a cord around the wrist and a long sleeve to cover up the joining. Anyway, the problem has been met.

In the furnace room he has found a heavy sheet

of tin for the thunder storm, and I have suggested that he dig in a nearby gravel pit for a basket of rain to hurl against the pirates' window. But hard beans, he says, are better, and he has won the cook's consent. For the slow monotone of water dripping from the roof in our second act, a single bean, he tells me, dropped gently in a pan is a baffling counterfeit.

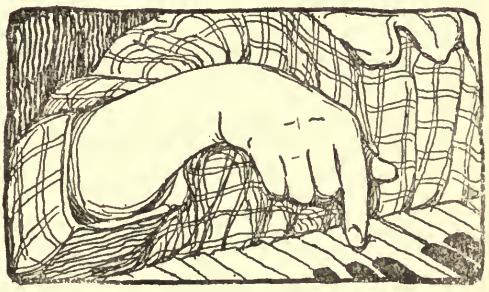
The lightning seems not to bother him, for he owns a pocket flashlight; but the mighty wind that comes brawling from the ocean was at first a sticker. The vacuum cleaner popped into his head, but was put aside. The fireplace bellows were too feeble for any wind that had grown a beard. His manager of finance, however, laid aside his book one night—a weary tract upon the law—and displayed an ability to moan and whistle through his teeth. The very casement rattled in the blast. He has agreed to sit in the wings and loose a sufficient storm upon a given signal.

Our stage is cramped. Three strides stretch from side to side. "Can this cockpit" you ask, "hold the vasty fields of France?" It is not, of course, the vasty fields of France that we are trying to hold; but we do lack space for the kind of riot the manager has in mind in the final scene. He wants nothing girlish. Sabers and pistols are his demand—a knife between the teeth—and more yelling than I could possibly put down in print. A bench must be upset, the beer-cask overturned, a

jug of Darlin's grog spilled, and one stool, at least, must be smashed—preferably on the captain's head, who must, however, be consulted. Patch-Eye and the Duke are not the kind of pirates that lie down and whine for mercy at a single punch.

At first our manager was baffled how the pirates were to ascend a ladder to their sleeping loft. They had no place to go. They would crack their ugly heads upon the ceiling. The costumer was positive (parsimony!) that a hole—even a little hole—should not be cut in the plaster overhead for their disappearance. If the chandelier had been an honest piece of metal they might have perched on it until the act ran out. Or perhaps the candles could be extinguished when their legs were still climbing visibly. At last the manager has contrived that a plank be laid across the tops of two step-ladders, behind a drop so that the audience cannot see. No reasonable pirate could refuse to squat upon the plank until the curtain fell.

We are getting on. Our company has been selected. We need only a handful of actors, but the manager has enlisted the street. The dearest little girl has been chosen for Betsy, and each day she



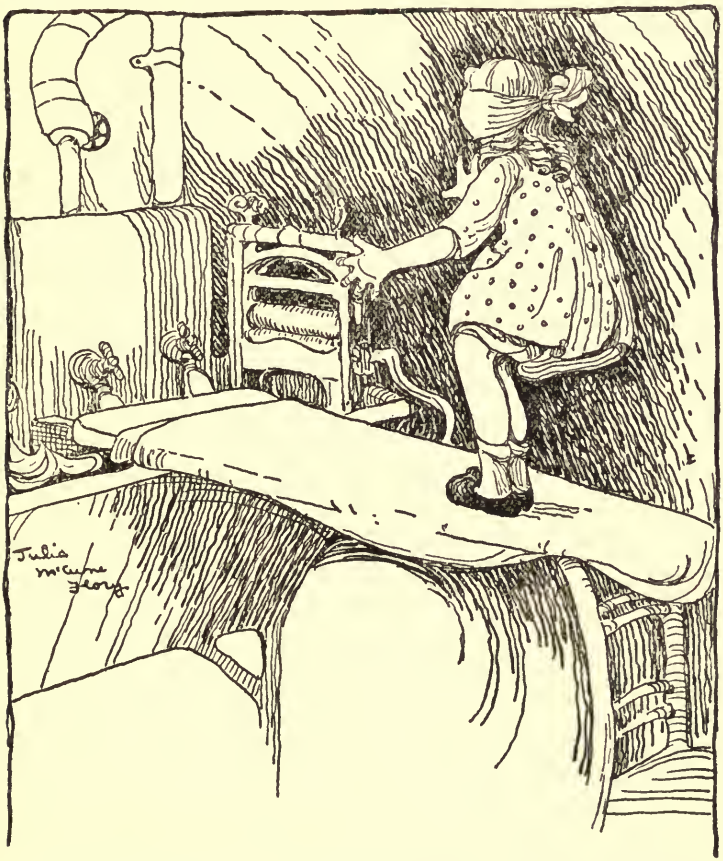
With uncertain, questing finger

practices her lullaby at the piano with uncertain, questing finger. A gentle rowdy of twelve will speak the Duke's blood-curdling lines. I understand that two quarrelsome pirates have nearly come to blows which shall act the captain. The hero, Red Joe, will be played by the manager himself, for it is he who owns the pistol. Is not the boy who has the baseball the captain of his nine?

I owe an apology to all the mothers of our cast; for the rough language of my lines outweighs their gentler home instruction. Whenever several of our actors meet there is used the vile language of the sea. By the bones of my ten fingers has replaced the anemic oaths of childhood. One little girl has been told she cries as easily as a crocodile. Another little girl was heard to say she would slit her sister's *wisdom*—a slip, no doubt, for *wizen*. And Blast my lamps! and Sink my timbers! are rolled profanely on the tongue.

In every attic on the street a rakish craft flies the skull and crossbones, and roves the Spanish Main on rainy afternoons. Innocent victims—girls, chiefly, who will tattle unless a horrid threat is laid upon them—are forced blindfold to walk the plank. If the wind blows, scratching the trees against the roof, it is, by their desire, a tempest whirling their stout ship upon the rocks. What ho! We split! Mysterious chalkings mark the cellar stairs and hint of treasure buried in the coal-

hole. At every mirror pirates practice their cruel faces.



Innocent victims . . . are forced blindfold to walk the plank

And now the daggers are complete, and their tip of blood has been squeezed from its twisted tube. Chests and neighbors have been rummaged

for outlandish costumes. From the kindling-pile a predestined stick has become the timber leg of the wicked Duke. The butcher's hook has yielded to persuasion.

Presently rehearsals will begin—

I have been reading lately, and I have come on a sentence with which I am in disagreement. I shall not tell the name of the book (mere mulishness!) but I hope you know it or can guess. It is a tale of children and of a runaway perambulator and of folk who never quite grew up, with just a flick of inquiry—a slightest gesture now and then—toward precious rascals like our Patch-Eye and the Duke. It's author stands, in my opinion, a better chance of our lasting memory than any writer living.

If you have read this book, you have known in its author a man who is himself a child—one from whom the years have never taken toll. And if you have lingered from page to page, you know what humor is, and love and gentleness. I think that children must have clambered on his familiar knee and that he learned his plot from their trustful eyes.

Someone has been reading my very copy of this book, for it is marked with pencil and whole chapters have been thumbed. I would like to know who this reader is—a woman, beyond a doubt—who has dug in this fashion to the author's heart. But

the book is from a lending library. She is only a number pasted inside the cover, a date that warns her against a fine.

Her pencil has marked the words to a richer cadence. I like to think that she has children of her own and that she read the book at twilight in the nursery, and that its mirth was shared from bed to bed. But the pathetic parts she did not read aloud, fearing to see tears in her children's eyes. Before her own at times there must have floated a mist. She is a gracious creature, I am sure, with a gentleness that only a mother knows who sits with drowsy children. And now that it is my turn to read the book—for so does fancy urge me—I hear her voice and the echo of her children's laughter among the pages.

It is a book about a great many things—about David and about a sausage machine, about a little dog which was supposed to have been caught up by mistake. But when the handle was reversed out he came, whole and complete except that his bark was missing. A sausage still stuck to his tail, which presently he ate. And it proved to be his bark, for at the last bite of the sausage his bark returned. And David took his salty handkerchief from his eyes and laughed. There is a chapter on growing old—marked in pencil—a subject which the author of this book knew nothing about, never having grown old himself. And there is another chapter about a spinster, also marked. This chap-

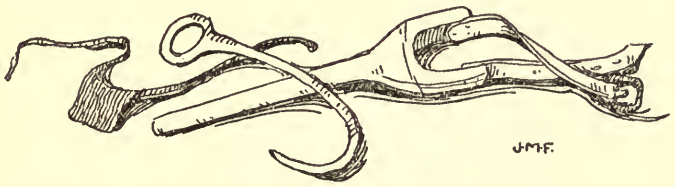
ter sings with exquisite melody, but breaks once to a sob for a love that has been lost. But the book is chiefly about children.

There is one particular sentence in this book with which I am not in agreement. ". . . down the laughing avenues of childhood, where memory tells us we run but once. . . ." I cannot believe that. I cannot believe we run but once. In the heart of the man who wrote the book there lives a child. And a child dwells in the heart of the woman of the lending library.

We are too ready to believe that childhood passes with the years—that its fine imagination is blunted with the hard practice of the world. Too long have we been taught that the clouds of glory fade in the common day—that the lofty castles of the morning perish in the noon-day sun. The magic vista is golden to the coming of the twilight, and the sunset builds a gaudy tower that out-tops the dawn. If a man permits, a child keeps house within his heart to the very end.

And therefore, as I think of those whittled daggers with their spot of blood, of that popping pistol, of the captain's horrid hook, of the black craft flying the skull and crossbones in the attic, I know, despite appearance, that I am young myself. I snap my fingers at the clock. It ticks merely for its own amusement. I proclaim the calendar is false. The sun rises and sets but makes no chilling notch upon the heart. Once again, despite the

weary signpost of the years, I run on the laughing avenues of childhood.



My preface outstays its time. Even as I write our audience has gathered. Limber folk in front squat on the floor. Bearded folk behind perch on chairs as on a balcony. Already, behind the scenes, the captain of the pirates has assumed his hook and villainous attire. Patch-Eye mumbles his lines against a loss of memory. Paint has daubed him to a rascal. The evil Duke limps for practice on his timber leg. Presently our curtain will rise. We shall see the pirate cabin, with the lighthouse blinking in the distance, the parrot, Flint's lantern and the ladder to the sleeping loft. We shall hear a storm unparalleled, like a tempest from the ocean—hissed through the teeth. We shall see the pirates in tattered costume and in pigtails made of stockings.

And now to bring this tedious explanation to a close, permit me to hush our orchestra for a final word. I have a most important announcement. It is the sum and essence of all these pages. This

play of pirates—doctored somewhat with fiercer oaths and lengthened for older actors—this play and my other play of beggars I dedicate with my love to *John Abram Flory*, who, as Red Joe, was the most frightful pirate of them all.

ON CHOOSING A TITLE

I FIND difficulty in selecting a name for my pirate play. Children seem so easy in comparison—John or Gretchen, or Gwendolyn for parents of romantic taste. Gwendolyn I myself dislike, and I have thought I would give it to a cow if ever I owned a farm. But this is prejudice. To name a child, I repeat, one needs only to run his finger down the column of his acquaintance, or think which aunt will have the looser purse-strings in her will.

An unhappy choice, after all, is rare. Here and there a chocolate Pearl or a dusky crinkle-headed Blanche escapes our logic; but who can think of a sullen Nancy? Its very sound, tossed about the nursery, would brighten a maiden even if she were peevish at the start. I once knew an excellent couple of the name of Bottom, who chose Ruby for their offspring; but I have no doubt that the in-

felicity was altered at the font. The fact is that most of our names grow in time to fit our figure and our character. Margaret and Helen sound thin or fat, agreeable or dull, as our friends and neighbors rise before us; and any newcomer to our affection quickly erases the aspect of its former ugly tenant. I confess that till lately a certain name brought to my fancy a bouncing, red-armed creature; but that by a change of lease upon our street it has acquired an alien grace and beauty. Perhaps a scrawny neighbor by the name of Falstaff might remain inconsequent, but I am sure that if a lady called Messilina moved in next door and were of charming manner, a month would blur the bad suggestion of her name; which presently—if our gardens ran together—would come to sound sweetly in my ears.

But a play (more than a child or neighbor) is offered for a sudden judgment—to sink or swim upon a first impression—and its christening is an especial peril. I have fretted for a month to find a title for my comedy.

My first choice was *A Frightful Play of Pirates.* In the word *frightful* lay the double meaning that I wanted. It held up my hands, as it were, for mercy. It is an old device. Did not Keats, when a novice in his art, attempt by a modest preface to disarm the critics of his Endymion? "It is just," he wrote, "that this youngster should die away." Yet my title was too long. I could not hope, if

my comedy reached the boards, that a manager could afford such a long display of electric lights above the door. It would require more than a barrel of lamps.

The Pirates of Clovelly was not bad, except for length, but it was too obviously stolen from Gilbert's opera. I could feel my guilty fingers in his pocket.

'S Death was suggested, but it was too flippant, too farcical. *'S Blood*, although effective in red lights, met the same objection. *The Spittin' Devil*, named for our pirate ship, lacked refinement. Certainly no lady in silk and lace would admit acquaintance with so gross a personage.

Darlin' was offered to me—the name of the old lady with one tooth who cooks and mixes the grog for my sailormen. And I still think that with better spelling it would be an excellent title for musical comedy. But it was naught for a pirate play. Its anemia would soften the vigor of my lines. One could as well call the tale of Bluebeard by the name of his casual cook.

Then *Clovelly* seemed enough. At the very least—if my publisher were energetic—it ensured a brisk sale of the printed play among the American tourists on the Devon coast, who travel by boat or char-a-banc to this ancient fishing village where we set our plot. For even a trivial book sells to trippers if its story is laid around the corner. Would it not be pleasant, I thought, when I visit the place again,

to see them thumbing me as they waited for the steamer—to see a whole window of myself placed in equal prominence with picture postal cards? When I registered at the inn alongside the wharf might I not hope that the landlady would recognize my name and give me, as an honored guest, a front room that looks upon the ocean? Perhaps, as I had my tea and clotted cream on the village staircase, I might mention casually to a pretty tourist that I was the author of the book that protruded from her handbag—and fetch my dishes to her table.

It is so seldom that an obscure author catches anyone *flagrante dilicto* on his book. Will no one ever read a book of mine in the subway, that I may tap him on the shoulder? Do travelers never put me in their grips? Must everyone read in public the latest novel, and reserve all plays and essays for their solitary hours? At the club I shuffle to the top any periodical that contains my name, but the crowded noon buries me deep again.

At best, maybe, in a lending library, I see a date stamped inside my cover; but, although I linger near the shelf, no one comes to draw me down. I think that hunters must look with equal hunger on the bear's tread. 'T is here! 'T is there! But the cunning creature has escaped. Blackmore's pleasant ghost frequents the shadowy church at Porlock where he married Lorna and John Ridd, or roams the Valley of the Rocks to see the studious

pilgrims at his pages. Stevenson haunts the gloomy inlet where the Admiral Benbow stood and where old Pew came tapping in the night. In the flesh I shall join their revels as an equal comrade. *Clovelly*, however, although its lilt was pleasant to the ear, was an insufficient title.

Skull and Crossbones was too obvious, and my next choice was *The Gibbet.* But there was the disadvantage of scaring the timid. Old ladies would pass me by. It would check the sale of tickets. My nephew, who is fourteen and not at all timid, was stout in its defense. He pronounces it as if the *g* were the hard kind that starts off gurgle. *G*ibbet! He asked me if I had a hanging in the piece. If so, he knew how the business could be managed without chance of accident—an extra rope fastened to the belt behind. I told him that it was none of his business how I ended up the pirates. I would hang them or not, as I saw fit. He would have to pay his quarter like anybody else and sit it through.

He suggested *From Dish-Pan to Matrimony*—obviously a jest. The sly rogue laughs at me. I must confess, however, that he has given me some of my best lines. "Villainy 's afoot!" for example, and "Sink me stern up!" His peaceful school breeds a wealth of pungent English.

I was in despair. *Revenge!* Would that have done? I see a maddened father stand with smoking revolver above the body of a silky-whiskered villain. "Doris," the panting parent cries, "the

butcher boy knows all and wants you for his bride." And down comes the happy curtain on the lovers. *The Wreckers* belongs to Stevenson. *The Pirates' Nest!* It is too ornithological. The Natural History Museum might buy a copy and think I had cheated them.

And then *Channel Lights!* It sends us sharply to the days of the older melodrama—days when we exchanged a ten-cent piece for a gallery seat and hissed the villain. Do you recall the breathless moment when the heroine implored the villain to give her back her stolen child? For answer the cruel fellow tied the darling to the buzz-saw. Or that darker scene when he tossed the lady to the black waters of the Thames, with the splash of a dipper up behind? Hurry, master hero! Your horse's hoofs clatter in the wings. Gallop, Dobbin! A precious life depends upon your speed. Our dangerous plot hangs by a single thread.

It is quite a task to find a sufficient title. I have wavered for a month.

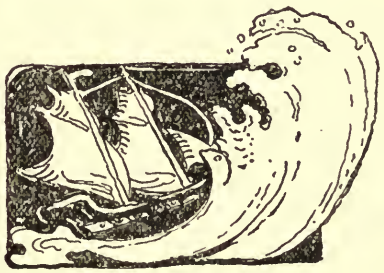
But now my efforts seem rewarded.

There is a wharf in London below the Tower, not far from the India docks. It has now sunk to common week-day uses, and I suppose its rotten timbers are piled with honest, unromantic merchandise. But once pirates were hanged there. It was the first convenient place for in-bound ships to dispose of this dirty, deep-sea cargo. Doubtless hereabout the lanes and building-tops were crowded

with an idle throng as on a holiday, and wherries to the bankside and the play paused with suspended oar for a sight of the happy festival. Did Hamlet wait upon this ghastly prologue? Shakespeare himself, unplayed script in hand, mused how tragedy and farce go hand in hand. In those golden days with which our comedy concerns itself, a gibbet stood on Wapping wharf and pirates stepped off the fatal cart to a hangman's jest. We may hear the shouts of the 'prentice lads echoing across the centuries.

I cannot hope that many persons—except dusty scholars—will know of the district's ancient ill-repute, yet Wapping wharf figures often in my dialogue as the somber motif of a pirate's life. It conveys to the plot the sense of mystery. It needs but a handful of electric lamps.

If no one offers me a better title I shall let it stand.

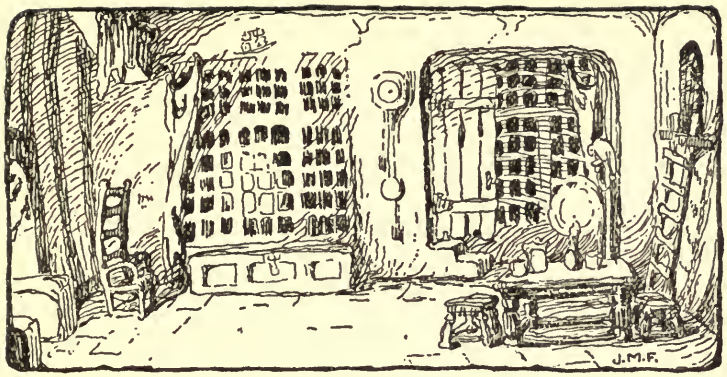


Wappin' Wharf

A Frightful Comedy of Pirates

First produced in January, 1922, at the Play House, Cleveland, under the direction of Frederic McConnell. The settings and costumes were designed by Julia McCune Flory. The cast was as follows:

The Duke	*William C. Keough*
Patch-Eye	*Howard Burns*
The Captain	*Ewart Whitworth*
Red Joe	*K. Elmo Lowe*
Darlin'	*Mary Gilson*
Betsy	*Jeanette Geoghegan*
Old Meg	*Emma Tilden*
Sailor Captain	*Ganson Cook*
Sailors	*Vance Stewart, Alvin Shulman, Arthur Kraus*



Wappin' Wharf

A Frightful Comedy of Pirates

ACT I

Our scene is the wind-swept coast of Devon. By day there is a wide stretch of ocean far below. The time is remote and doubtless great ships of forgotten build stand out from Bristol in full sail for western shores. Their white canvas winks in the morning sun as if their purpose were a jest. They seek a northwest passage and the golden mines of India. But we must be loose and free of date lest our plot be shamed by broken fact. A thousand years are but as yesterday. We shall make no more than a general gesture toward the wide spaces of the past.

The village of Clovelly climbs in a single street—a staircase, really—from the shore to the top of the cliff, and is fagged and out of breath half way. But on a

still dizzier crag, storm-blown, clinging by its toes, there stands the pirates' cabin. To this top-most ledge fishwives sometimes scramble by day to seek a belated sail against Lundy's Isle. But after twilight a night wind searches the crannies of the rock and whines to the moon of its barren quest, and then no villager, I think, chooses to walk in that direction. I have visited Clovelly and have kicked a sodden donkey from the wharf to the top of the street, past the shops of Devon cream and picture postal cards, but have sought in vain the pirates' cabin. Since our far-off adventure of tonight ten thousand tempests have snarled across these giddy cliffs and we must convince our reason that these highest crags where we pitch our plot have long since been toppled in a storm. Where yonder wave lathers the shaggy headland, as if Neptune had turned barber, we must fancy that the pinnacles of yesteryear lie buried in the sea.

We had hoped for a play upon the sea, with a tall mast rocking from wing to wing and a tempest roaring at the rail. Alas! Our pirates grow old and stiff. They have retired, as we say, from active practice and live in idle luxury on shore. Yet we shall see that their villainy still thrives.

Our scene is their cabin on the cliff. It is a rough stone building with peeling plaster and slates that by day are green with moss. But it is night and the wind is whistling its rowdy companions from the sea. Until the morning they will play at leap-frog

from cliff to cliff. Far below is the village of Clovelly, snug with fire and candles.

We enter the cabin without knocking—like neighbors through a garden—and poke about a bit before our hosts appear. A door, forward at the right, leads to the kitchen. Back stage, also, at the right, a ladder rises to a sleeping loft. On the left wall are a chimney and fireplace with a crane and pot for heating grog, and smoky timbers above to mark the frequent thirst. On a great beam overhead are bags of clinking loot and shining brasses from wrecked ships. Peppers hang to dry before the fire, and a lighted ship's lantern swings from a hook. At the rear of the cabin, to the left, a row of mullioned windows looks at sea and cliffs in a flash of lightning. Below is a seaman's chest. Above, on the broken plaster, is scrawled a ship. In the middle, at the rear, there is a clock with hanging pendulum and weights. A gun of antique pattern leans beside the clock. To the right the cabin is recessed, with a door right-angled in the jog and other windows looking on the sea. A parrot sits on its perch with curbed profanity. The gaudy creature is best if stuffed, for its noisy tongue would drown our dialogue. Like Hamlet's player it would speak beyond its lines and raise a quantity of barren laughter. Our furniture is a table and three stools, and a tall-backed chair beside the hearth. On the table a candle burns, bespattered with tallow. The cabin glows with fire light.

At the lifting of the curtain there is thunder and lightning, and a rush of wind—if it can be managed. Two pirates are discovered, drinking at the table. By the smack of their lips it is excellent grog. One

Two pirates are discovered drinking at a table

of them—Patch-Eye—has lost an eye and he wears a black patch. His hair curls up in a pig-tail, like any sailor before Nelson. It looks as stiff as a hook and he might almost be lifted by it and hung on a peg. But all of our pirates wear pigtails—except one, Red Joe.

The other pirate at the table is called the Duke, for no apparent reason as he is a shabby rogue. We must not run our finger down the peerage in hope of finding him, or think that he owns a palace on the Strand. He has only one leg, with a timber below the knee. He wears a long cloak so that the actor's rusticated leg can be folded out of sight. The Duke has a great red nose—grog and rum and that sort of thing. His whiskers are the bush that marks the merry drinking place.

Patch-Eye is melancholy—almost sentimental at times. He would stab a man, but grieve upon a sparrow. At heart we fear he is a coward, and stupid. The Duke, on the contrary, is shrewd and he does a lot of thinking. He has heavy eyebrows. He is the kind of thinker that you just know that he is thinking. Both pirates are very cruel—and profane, but we must be careful.

And now we hush the melancholy fiddlers. If this comedy can stir the croaking bass-viol to any show of mirth, our work tops Falstaff. Glum folk with beards had best withdraw. Only the young in heart will catch the slender meaning of our play. Let 's light the candles and draw the curtain!

PATCH: Darlin'! Darlin'! (*He lolls back in his chair and stretches out his legs for comfort.*) Darlin'!

(*At this a dirty old woman with one tooth appears from the kitchen. She is called Darlin' just for fun, as she is not at all kissable. A sprig of mistletoe, even in the Christmas season, would beckon vainly.*)

PATCH: Me friend, the Duke, is thirsty. Will yer fill the cups? Hurry, ol' dear! And squeeze in jest a bit o' lemon. It sets the stomich.

DARLIN': Yer sets yer stomich like it were hen's eggs. Alers coddlin' it.

(*She stirs and tastes the pot of grog, and hoists her wrinkled stockings.*)

DUKE: There 's no one like Darlin' fer mixin' grog.

DARLIN': Fer that kind word I'm lovin' yer. (*She looks at him with admiration.*) Ain 't he a figger o' a man? Wenus was nothin'. Jest nothin' at all.

PATCH: It 's grog beats off the melancholy. As soon as me pipes go dry, I gets homesick fer the ocean. Here we be, Duke, thrown up at last ter rot like driftwood on the shore. No more sailin' off to Trinidad! No tackin' 'round the Hebrides! We is ships as has sprung a leak. It was 'appy days when we sailed with ol' Flint on the Spanish Main.

DUKE: 'Appy days, Patch! (*They drink.*)

PATCH: Aye! The blessed, dear, ol' roarin' hulk. No better pirate ever lived than Flint. Smart with his cutlass. Quick at the trigger. Grog! A sloppin' pail o' it was jest a sip.

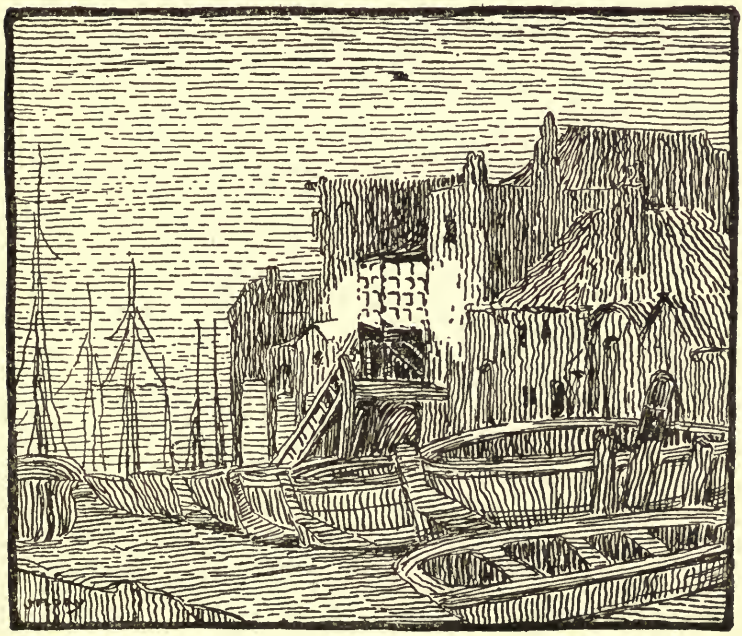
DUKE: I used ter tell him that his leg was holler.

PATCH: He was a vat, was Flint—jest a swishin' keg.

DUKE: Grog jest sizzled and disappeared, like when yer drops it on a red-hot sea-coal.

PATCH: Fer twenty year and more me and you has seen ol' Flint march his wictims off the plank.

DUKE: "Step lively!" he 'd say. "Does n't yer hear Davy callin' to yer?" There was never a sailorman ever sat in the Port Light at Wappin' wharf which could drink with Flint.



"Port Light" at Wappin' Wharf

PATCH: Wappin' wharf and gibbets is nothin' ter talk about. Funerals even is cheerfuller.

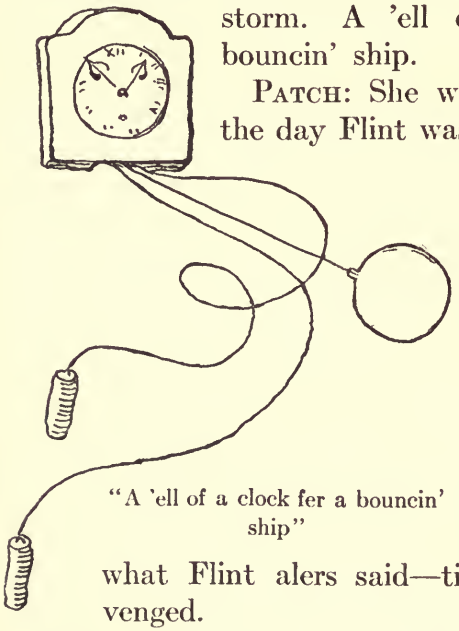
DUKE: There 's his parrot.

PATCH: She used ter cuss soft and gentle to herself—'appy all the day. She ain 't spoke since Flint was took. Peckin' at yer finger and broodin'.

DUKE: There 's his ol' clock.

PATCH: As hung in the cabin o' the Spittin' Devil.

DUKE: With the pendulum gettin' tangled in a storm. A 'ell of a clock fer a bouncin' ship.



"A 'ell of a clock fer a bouncin' ship"

PATCH: She was tickin' peaceful the day Flint was hanged. But she stopped—does yer remember it?—the very minute they pushed him off the ladder.

DUKE: She ain't ticked since.

PATCH: It makes yer 'stitious. And she won 't never run agin—that 's what Flint alers said—till his death 's revenged.

DUKE: He told us never ter wind her—says she 'd start hisself without no windin' when the right time came.

PATCH: If I was ter look up and see that pendulum

swingin'—Horrers! Yeller elephants would be nothin'!

DUKE: Pooh! I 'd give a month o' grog jest ter hear the ol' dear tickin', and ter know that Flint was restin' easy in his rotten coffin—swappin' stories with the pretty angels.

PATCH: I loved Flint like a brother. (*He is quite sentimental about this.*) It was him knocked this out. (*Pointing to his missing eye.*) But it was jest in the way o' business. We differed a leetle in the loot. He was very persuasive, was ol' Flint.

DUKE: Yer talks like a woman. They loves yer to cuff 'em. Them was 'appy days, Patch.

PATCH: Blast me gig what 's left, Duke, but me and you has seen a heap o' sights. I suppose I 've drowned meself a hundred men. It 's comfertin' when yer lays awake at night. I feels I ain 't wasted meself. I 've used me gifts. I ain 't been a foolish virgin and put me shinin' talent inside a bushel. But me and you is driftwood now, Duke.

DUKE: Aye. But it ain 't no use snifflin' about it, ol' crocodile. Darlin' is certainly handy at mixin' grog. And we 've a right smart cabin with winders on the sea. Since I stuffed yer ol' shirt in the roof it hardly leaks.

PATCH: My shirt! Next week is me week fer changin'. How could yer ha' done it? I 'm a kinder perticerler dresser. I likes ter wash now and then—if it ain 't too often.

DUKE: Darlin', me friend Patch is thirsty. And

a drop meself. (*The cups are filled.*) Yer a precious ol' lady, and I loves yer.

DARLIN': Yer spoils me, Duke.

(*Lightning and a crash of thunder.*)

DUKE: It 's foul tonight on the ocean. How the wind blows! It be spittin' up outside. The channel 's as riled as a wampire when yer scorns her. How she snorts!

PATCH: The devil hisself is hissin' through his teeth.

DUKE: There 'll be sailormen tonight what 's booked fer Davy Jones's locker. I 'm not kickin' much ter be ashore. I rots peaceful.

(*Patch-Eye has opened the door to consult the night. It slams wide in the wind and the gust blows out the candle.*)

DUKE: Hi, there, for'ard! Batten yer hatch! Yer blowin' the gizzard out o' us.

"Yer blowin' the gizzard out o' us"

(*He hobbles on timber leg to the warm chair by the fire. Patch closes the door and sits. Darlin' relights the candle.*)

PATCH: Poor Flint! He was took on jest such a night.

Dropped inter the Port Light fer somethin' wet and warmin'. Jest ter kinder say goodby. Ship all fitted out. He 'd got three new sailormen—fine fellers as had been sentenced ter be hanged fer cuttin' purses, but had been let go, as they had reformed and wanted ter be honest pirates.

DUKE: I remembers the night, ol' sea-nymph. It was rainin' ter put out the fires o' hell—with the leetle devils stoakin' in the sinners. It 's sinners, Patch, as is used fer kindlers, ter keep the devils in a healthy sweat.

PATCH: He was ter sail when the tide ran out. Lord a Goody! How the tide runs down the Thames, as if it were homesick fer the ocean!

DUKE: But someone squealed.

PATCH: Squealers is worse 'n hissin' reptiles. They ketched Flint and they strung him to a gibbet. Poor ol' dear! I never touches me patch, but I thinks o' Flint.

DUKE: This here life is snug and easy. We has retired from practice, like store-keepers does who has made a fortin. Ain 't we settin' here in style and comfert, and jest waitin' fer the treasure ships ter come ter us? We gets the plums without chawin' at the dough. We blows out the lighthouse, and we sets our lantern so as ter fool 'em on the course, and when they smashes on the rocks, well—all we does is stuff our pokes with the treasure that washes up. I prays meself fer fog and dirty weather. Now I lay me, says I, and will yer send it thick and oozy?

PATCH: I ain 't disputin' yer. (*He cheers up a bit.*) And we robs landlubbers once in a while.

DUKE: Now yer talkin', ol' sea-lion. I 'm tellin' yer it were a good haul we made last night on Castle Crag.

PATCH: Who 's disputin' yer?

DUKE: I 'm tellin' yer. Silver candles! And spoons! Never seen such a heap o' spoons.

PATCH: What 's anyone want more 'n one spoon fer? Yer cleans it every bite agin the tongue.

DUKE: Yer disgusts me, Patch. Yer ain 't no manners. Fer meself I spears me food tidy on me knife.

(*The Duke sits looking at the seaman's chest at the rear of the cabin. He is deep in thought.*)

DUKE: There 's jest one leetle thing I does n't understand. I asks yer. (*He goes to the chest, opens it and draws out a rich velvet garment. He holds it up.*) What 's the meaning o' this here loot we took at Castle Crag? I asks yer. Ain 't we been by that castle a hundred times? The Earl, he don 't wear clothes like this. None o' the arstocky does, 'cept when they struts on Piccadilly. I asks yer, Patch. I asks yer who wears a thing like that.

(*He puts the garment around Patch's shoulders.*)

DARLIN': Yer looks like the Archbishop o' Canterbury.

PATCH: (*with strut and gesture*). His Grice takin' the air—pluckin' posies.

DUKE: Lookin' like a silly jackass.

PATCH: Yer hurts me feelin's, Duke.

(*The Duke folds the cloak and puts it back again in the chest. He sits at the table in meditation.*)

DUKE: I does n't like it, Patch. I does n't understand it. And what I does n't understand, I does n't like.

PATCH: What?

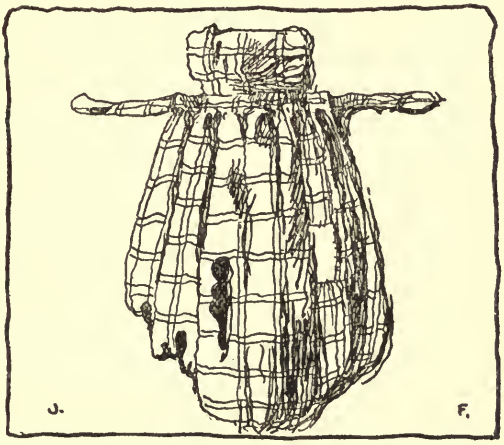
DUKE: Them gay clothes. Who owned 'em, I asks yer, afore we stole 'em.

PATCH: Darlin'! Me friend, the Duke, is thirsty. Yer had better mix another pot. Our cups is low. Yer does n't want ter be a foolish virgin and get ketched without no grog.

DUKE: With this bit o' slop what 's left I drinks to yer shinin' lamps—Wenus's flashin' gigs.

DARLIN': I loves yer, Duke.

(*She fills, mixes and stirs the pot. She tastes it like a practiced housewife. Her apron is maid of all work. It is towel, dust-rag, mop and handkerchief.*)



Her apron is towel, dust rag, mop and handkerchief

DUKE: What does yer make, ol' Cyclops, o' the new recruit?

PATCH: Red Joe?

DUKE: Him.

PATCH: He 's a right smart pirate, I says. I never seen a feller as could shoot so straight.

DUKE: I says so. But he 's a wee bit nobby—kinder stiff in the nose.

PATCH: Looks as if he knowed he was kinder good.

DUKE: It 's queer how he come ter us. Jest settin' on top his dory on the beach, when we found him. And what he said about his ship goin' down! Blast me ol' stump, but it were queer.

PATCH. Queer?

DUKE: Yer said it, Patch. Queerer than mermaids. Did we ever see a stick o' that ship? I 'm askin' yer, Patch.

PATCH: Ain 't I listenin'?

DUKE: Ain 't I tellin' yer? Nary a bit washed in. Did yer ever know a wreck 'long here where nothin' washed in—jest nothin'? I 'm askin' yer.

PATCH: You and me would starve if it happened regular.

DUKE: It 's what we lives by—pickin's on the beach.

PATCH: He 's a right smart pirate, 's Red Joe. The Captain—the most 'ticerler man I know—he took ter him at once. He 's a kinder good-lookin' feller.

DARLIN': (*stirring at the pot*). He ain 't got whiskers like the Duke.

(*She spits—must I say it?—she spits into the fire.*)

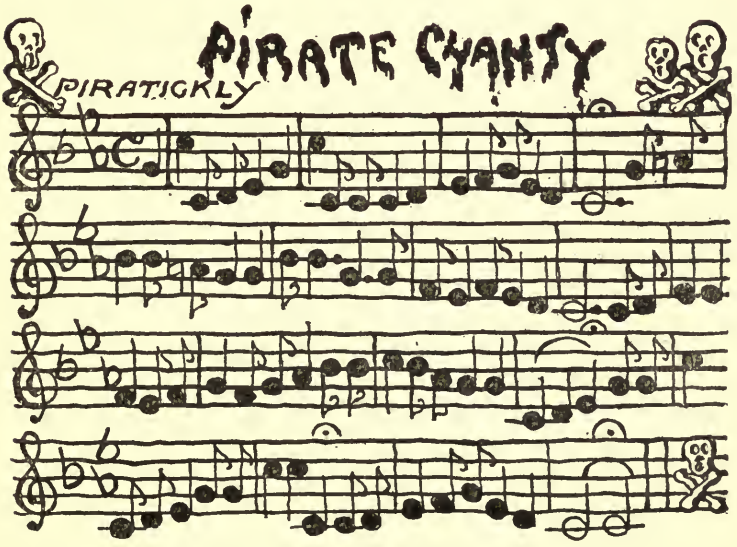
DUKE: Queer that never a stick washed in.

PATCH: I 'm not denyin' yer, Duke. Where 's Red Joe now? It 's gettin' on. I 'll jest take a look fer him. (*He takes the lantern from its hook and stands at the open door.*) It ain 't blowin' so hard. Ol' Borealis—I speaks poetical—ain 't strainin' at his waistcoat buttons like he was.

DUKE: Igerence! I pities yer. Borealis ain 't wind. He 's rainbows.

(*Patch-Eye goes into the night. The Duke sits to a greasy game of solitaire.*)

DUKE: It 's queer, I says. Nary a stick! Jest Red Joe on top his dory! (*He sings abstractedly.*)



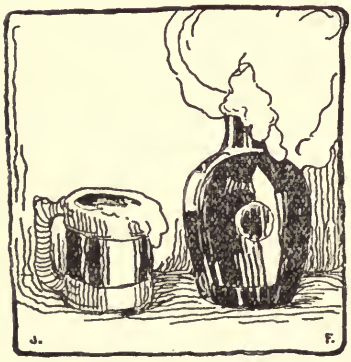
Bill Bones used ter say, on many a day,
When takin' a ship fer its loot,
That a blow on the head was quickest dead
And safest and best ter boot.
But a wictim's end, fer meself I contend—
There 's a hundred been killed by me—
Is a walk, I 'll be frank, on a slippery plank,
And a splash in the roarin' sea.

(*He turns and surveys the drawing above the windows. He cocks his head like a connoisseur, critically—with approval.*)

DUKE: I 'm the artist o' that there masterpiece. The Spittin' Devil! I done it on a rainy mornin'. Genius is queer. (*Then he sings again.*)

Ol' Pew had a jerk with a long-handled dirk—
His choice was a jab in the dark—

(*He is engaged thus, fumbling with his cards, when Darlin', crossing from the fire, interrupts him.*)



"It eases yer pipes"

DARLIN': Duke, will yer have a nip o' grog? It eases yer pipes. Yer sounds as if yer had crumbs in yer gullet.

(*The Duke pushes forward his cup.*)

DUKE: It 's a lovely tune, and I wrote the words meself. (*He continues his song.*)

Old Pew had a jerk with a long-handled dirk—
His choice was a jab in the dark—
And Morgan's crew, 'twixt me and you,
Considered a rope a lark.
But a prettier end, I repeat and contend—
And I 've sailed on every sea—
Is a plunge off the side in the foamin' tide.
It tickles a sailor like me.

DARLIN': Duke, does yer happen ter have a wife?

DUKE: (*deeply engaged*). Some tunes is hard, so I jest makes 'em up as I goes along.

Blackbeard had a knife which he stuck in his wife.
Fer naggin', says he ter me—

DARLIN': Has yer a wife? A wife as might turn up, I mean.

DUKE: Say it agin, Darlin'.

DARLIN': Most sailors has wives o' course, strewed here and there from Bristol to Guinea—jest ter make all ports cozy. So 's yer goin' home ter a 'appy family, no matter where yer steers.

DUKE: It 's comfertable, Darlin'— I 'll not deny it—when yer heads ter harbor to see a winkin' candle in a winder on a hill, and know that a faithful wife and a couple o' leetle pirates is waitin' ter hug yer.

DARLIN': I says so, Duke. I 've been a wife meself on and off, with husbands sailin' in and out—kissin' yer and 'oistin' sail. Roundabout, I says,

makes 'appy marriages. Has yer a wife, Duke—livin', as yer can remember?

DUKE: Yer a bold, for'ard creature. Are yer proposin' ter me?

(*Something like a wink shows in the bush.*)

DARLIN': I blush fer yer bad manners, Duke. I 'm a lady and I waits patient fer the 'appy question. I lets me beauty do the pleadin'. I was a flamin' roarer in me time. Lovers was nothin'. Dozens! There was a sea-captain once—(*She smiles dreamily, then seems to cut her throat with her little finger.*) Positive! Jest 'cause we tiffed. And a stage-coach driver! I had ter cool his passion with a rollin' pin. He brooded hisself inter drink. 'Appy days! (*She is lost for a moment in her glorious past, then blows her nose upon her apron and returns to us.*) Duke—askin' yer pardon—I was noticin' lately that you was castin' yer eyes on leetle Betsy.

DUKE: As washes the dishes?

DARLIN': Her.

DUKE: Go 'long!

DARLIN': And I thought yer might be drawn to her.

DUKE: Darlin', I 'm easy riled.

DARLIN': Yer can have her, Duke, on one condition.

DUKE: She 's a pretty leetle girl.

DARLIN': Yer must set me up in a pub in Bristol—with brass beer-pulls.

DUKE: I 'll not deny I 've given her a thought.

Usual, wives is nuisances—naggin' at yer fer sixpences. But sometimes I does get lonesome on a wet night when there are nothin' ter do. I need someone ter hand me down me boots. Betsy 'd make a kinder cozy wife. Could yer learn her ter make grog?

DARLIN': Aye.

DUKE: I might do worse. And roast pig that crackles?

DARLIN': I could learn her.

DUKE: I might do worser. I 'd marry you, Darlin'—

DARLIN': Dearie!

DUKE: But yer gettin' on. Patch might marry yer. He 's only got one eye.

DARLIN': (*with scorn*). Patch!

DUKE: I 'll not deny I 've been considerin' leetle Betsy. I was thinkin' about it this mornin' as I was cleanin' me boot. Wives cleans boots. I 'm the sort o' sailorman she would be sure ter like.

DARLIN': And what about the pub?

DUKE: Blast me stump, Darlin', I 'll not ferget yer.

DARLIN': Does I get brass beer-pulls in the tap?

DUKE: Everythin' shiny.

DARLIN': I 'm lovin' yer.

DUKE: Betsy would kinder jump at me. There 's somethin' tender about a young girl's first love—cooin' in yer arms.

DARLIN': Easy, Duke!

DUKE: I alers was a fav'rite with the ladies. I think it 's me whiskers.

DARLIN': 'Vast there, Duke! There 's a shoal ahead. Red Joe 's a right smart feller.

DUKE: Red Joe?

DARLIN': Him. He sets and watches her.

DUKE: What can she see in a young feller like that?

DARLIN': Women 's queer folks. They 're wicious wampires. Jest yer watch 'em together. Red Joe 's snoopin' in on yer.

DUKE: Yer can blast me. He ain 't got whiskers.

DARLIN': I 'm tellin' yer, Duke. If I was you I 'd tumble that Red Joe off a cliff. I 'm hintin' to yer, Duke. Off a cliff! (*She sniffs audibly.*) It 's the pig. I clean fergot the pig. It 's burnin' on the fire. Off a cliff! I 'm hintin' to yer.

(*She runs to the kitchen.*)

DUKE: Red Joe! Women 's queer—queerer than mermaids. A snooper! Jest a 'prentice pirate! No whiskers! Nothin'!

(*At this moment there is a stamping of feet outside and Patch-Eye enters with Red Joe.*

If Red Joe were born a gentleman we might expect silver buckles and a yellow feather to trail across his shoulder, for he bears a jaunty dignity. His is a careless grace—the swagger of a pleasant vagabond—a bravado that snaps its fingers at danger. His body has the quickness of a cat, his eye a flash of humor—kindly, unless necessity sharpens it.

As poets were thick in those golden days we suspect that the roar of the ocean sets rhymes jingling in his heart. He is, however, almost as shabby as the other pirates, although he wears no pigtail. His collar is turned up. He wrings the water from his hat.

Patch-Eye throws himself on the seaman's chest and falls asleep at once. He snores an obligato to our scene. Just once an ugly dream disturbs him and we must fancy that a gibbet has crossed the frightful shadow of his thoughts.)

DUKE: Evenin', ol' sea-serpent! Where has you been?

JOE: Up at the lighthouse. It 's as mirky as hell's back door.

DUKE: See Petey?

JOE: I did. He was puttering with his light and meowing to his tabby cat.

DUKE: We 're a blessin' ter ol' Petey. I 'm bettin' me stump he 'd get lonesome up there 'cept fer us. (*He points to the window to the right, where the lighthouse shows.*) There 's ol' Petey, starin' at the ocean. Yer ain 't never seen a light at that t' other winder, has yer Joe? We waits fer a merchantman which he knows has gold aboard. Then we jest tips a hint ter Petey, and he douses his light. Then we sets up our lantern—ol' Flint's lantern—outside on the rocks, jest where she shows at t' other winder. The ship sticks her nose agin the cliff. Smash!

(*At this point, after a few moments of convulsion,*

Patch-Eye falls off the chest. He sits up and rubs his eyes.)

PATCH: I dreamed o' gibbets!

DUKE: Yer is lucky, ol' keg o' rum, yer does n't dream o' purple rhinoceroses. Go back ter bed. (*Then to Joe.*) Smash! I says. On comes Petey agin. And we jest as innercent as babies in a crib. It was me own idear. Brains, young feller. Jest yer wait, Joey, till yer sees a light at t' other winder.

"And we jest as innercent as babies in a crib"

(*Betsy is heard singing in the kitchen. The Duke stops and listens. A dark thought runs through his head. His shrewd eye quests from kitchen door to Joe.*)

DUKE: Darlin'! Darlin'! (*She thrusts in her head.*)

DUKE: Where 's Betsy?

DARLIN': She 's washin' dishes.

DUKE: I 'm wonderin' if she would lay off a bit from her jolly occerpation, and sing us a leetle song.

DARLIN': (*calling*). Betsy! I wants yer.

PATCH: I never knowed yer cared fer music, Duke. Usually yer goes outside. Yer jest boohs.

DUKE: I does usual, Patch. Tonight 's perticerler.

Red Joe ain 't never heard Betsy sing. Does yer like music, Joe?

JOE: I like the roaring of the ocean. I like to hear the trees tossing in the wind.

PATCH: Wind ain 't music. Yer should hear Betsy. She 's got a leetle song that makes yer feel as good and peaceful as a whinin' parson.

DARLIN': (*beckoning at the kitchen door*). Betsy! Stop sloppin' with the dishes!

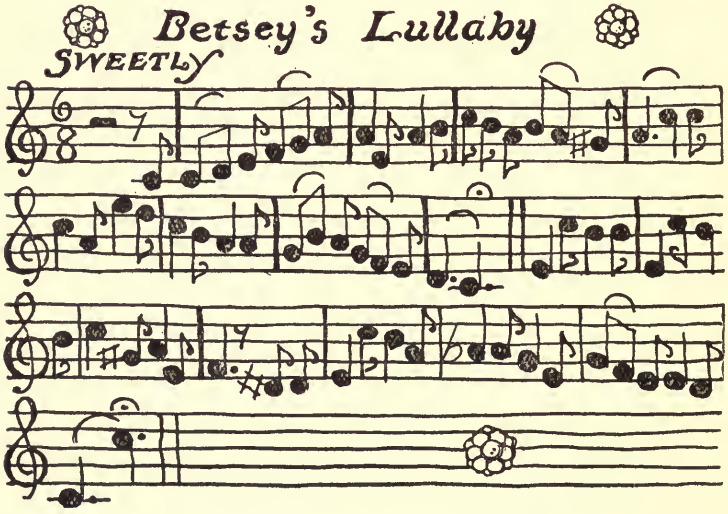
Betsy enters. She is a pretty girl. Our guess at her age is—but it is better not to guess. We have in our own experience made several humiliating blunders. Let us say that Betsy is young enough to be a grand-daugh-

Betsy enters

ter. Plainly she is a pirate by accident, not inheritance, for she is clean and she wears a pretty dress.)

DUKE: (*as he rises and makes a show of manners*). Betsy, yer is welcome ter the parlor. We wants Red Joe ter hear yer sing. That leetle song o' yers.

(*He returns to the recess at the rear of the cabin and covertly watches Joe. Patch-Eye is lost in heavenly meditation. Joe's attention is roused before the first stanza of the song is finished. By the third stanza Betsy sings to him alone.*)



BETSY: (*sings*).

The north wind's cheeks are puffed with tunes:
It whistles across the sky.

It's song is shrill and rough, until
The hour of twilight 's nigh.
Rest, my dear one, rest and dream.
The winds on tip-toe keep.
In the dusk of day they hum their lay,
And weary children sleep.

The waves since dawn roared on the rocks:
They snarled at the ships on the deep.
But at twilight hour they chain their power
And little children sleep.
Rest, my dear one, rest and dream.
The ships in a cradle swing,
And sailormen blink and children sink
To sleep, as the wavelets sing.

The sun at noon was red and hot:
It stifled the east and west.
But at even song the shadows long
Have summoned the world to rest.
Rest, my dear one, rest and dream.
The sun runs off from the sky.
But the stars, it 's odd, while children nod,
Are tuned to a lullaby.

(*She sings slowly, to a measure that might rock a cradle. This can be managed, for I have tried it with a chair. Once, Patch-Eye blows his nose to keep his emotions from exposure. But make him blow softly*—soto naso, *shall we say?—so as not to disturb the song. In Red Joe the song seems to*

have stirred a memory. At the end of each stanza Betsy pauses, as if she, too, dwelt in the past.)

PATCH: When I hears that song I feels as if I were rockin' babies in a crib—blessed leetle pirates, pullin' at their bottles, as will foller the sea some day.

(*He blows his sentimental nose. A slighter structure would burst in the explosion.*)

DUKE: Yer ol' nose sounds as if it were tootin' fer a fog. Yer might be roundin' the Isle o' Dogs on a mirky night.

(*He goes to the door and stretches out his hand for raindrops.*)

DUKE: Joe, you and me has got ter put ile in the lantern. Come on, ol' sweetheart. When yer sees this lantern blinkin' at that there winder, yer will know that willainy 's afoot.

(*He comes close to Darlin' and whispers.*)

DUKE: Yer said it, Darlin'. Yer said it. Red Joe 's castin' his eye on Betsy. Off a cliff! Tonight! Now! If I gets a chance. Off a cliff! Come on, Joey!

(*He goes outdoors with Red Joe, singing Betsy's song. The lullaby fades in the distance. Patch-Eye and Betsy are left together, for the roast pig again calls Darlin' to the kitchen.*)

PATCH: Will yer wait a bit, Betsy—askin' yer pardon—while I talks to yer?

BETSY: Of course, Patch.

PATCH: I don 't suppose, dearie, I 'm the kind o' pirate as sets yer thinkin' of fiddles tunin' up, ner

parsons. No, yer says. Ner cradles and leetle devils bitin' at their coral. And I don 't suppose yer has a kind o' hankerin' and yearnin'. Yer never sets and listens to me comin'. Course not, yer says. Betsy, if I talk out square you 'll not blab it all 'round the village, will yer? They would point their fingers at me, and giggle in their sleeves. I want ter tell yer somethin' o' a wery tender nater. There 's a leetle word as begins with *L*. *L*, I mean, not 'ell. I would n't want yer to think, Betsy, I 'm cussin'. 'Ell is cussin'. That leetle word is what 's ailing me. It 's love, Betsy. It 's me heart. Smashed all ter bits! Jesus, yer asks, what done it? It 's a pretty girl, I answers yer, as has smashed it. Does yer foller, Betsy? A pretty girl about your size, and with eyes the color o' yourn. What does yer say, Betsy? Yer says nothin'.

BETSY: I never meant to, Patch. I 'm sorry.

PATCH: Course you are. Jest as sorry as the careless feller as nudged Humpty Dumpty off the wall. But it did n't do no good. There he was, broke all ter flinders. And all the King's horses and all the King's men could n't fix him. Humpty Dumpty is me, Betsy. Regularly all split up, fore and aft, rib and keel. I mopes all day fer you, Betsy. And I mopes all night. Last night I did n't get ter sleep, jest fidgettin', till way past 'leven o' clock. And I woke agin at seven, askin' meself, if I loves you hopeless. Yer is a lump o' sugar, Betsy, as would sweeten ol' Patch's life. If we was married I 'd jest tag 'round

behind yer and hand yer things And now yer tells me there ain 't no hope at all.

BETSY: No hope at all, Patch.

PATCH: Yesterday I was countin' the potaters in the pot, sayin' ter meself: She loves me—She don 't love me. But the last potater did n't love me, Betsy. There was jest one too many potaters in the pot. No, yer says, yer could n't love me. Cause why? Cause Patch is a shabby pirate with only one eye.

BETSY: I am sorry, Patch.

(*She offers him her hand.*)

PATCH: Blessed leetle fingers, as twines their selves all 'round me heart. Patch, yer says, yer sorry. There ain 't no hope at all. Yer nudges him off the wall, but yer can 't fix him. But I never heard that Humpty Dumpty did a lot o' squealin' when he bust. He took it like a pirate. And so does Patch. I does n't sulk. If yer will pardon me, Betsy, I 'll leave yer. Me feelin 's get lumpy in me throat. I 'll take a wink o' sleep in the loft.

(*He climbs the ladder, but turns at the top.*)

PATCH: There was jest one too many potaters in the pot.

(*He disappears through the hole in the wall. Betsy arranges the mugs on the table, then stands listening. Presently there is a sound of footsteps. Red Joe enters at the rear.*)

JOE: I slipped the Duke in the dark. I came back to talk with you. (*Then bluntly, but with kindness.*) How old are you, my dear?

BETSY: I don 't know.

JOE: You don 't know? How long have you lived here?

BETSY: In this cabin? Three years.

JOE: And where did you live before?

BETSY: In the village—in Clovelly.

JOE: Did your parents live there?

BETSY: Y-e-s. I think so. I don 't know. Old Nancy, they called her—she brought me up. But she died three years ago.

"She did washing for the sailormen"

JOE: Who was old Nancy?

BETSY: She did washing for the sailormen.

JOE: Was she good to you?

BETSY: Oh, yes. I think—I do not know—that she was not my mother.

JOE: And Darlin'?

BETSY: Yes. She has been good to me. And the others, too. I seem to remember someone else. How long have you been a pirate?

JOE: A pirate? Years, it seems, my dear. But I am more used to a soldier's oaths. I have trailed a pike in the Lowland wars. The roar of cannon, and seige and falling walls, are gayer tunes than any ocean tempest. What is this that you remember, Betsy?

BETSY: It is far off. Some one sang to me. It

was not Nancy. When Nancy died, Darlin' took me and brought me up. That was three years ago. But last year the Captain and Duke and Patch-Eye came climbing up the rocks. They were sailormen, they said, who had lost a ship. And these cliffs with the sea pounding on the shore comforted them when they were lonely. So they stayed. And Darlin' and I cook for them.

JOE: Do you remember who it was who sang to you?

BETSY: No.

JOE: That song you just sang—where did you learn it?

BETSY: I have always known it. It makes me sad to sing it, for it sets me thinking—thinking of something that I have forgotten. (*She stands at the window above the sea.*) Some days I climb high on the cliffs and I look upon the ocean. And I know that there is land beyond—where children play—but I see nothing but a rim of water. And sometimes the wind comes off the sea, and it brings me familiar far-off voices—voices I once knew—voices I once knew—fragments from a life I have forgotten. Why do you ask about my song?

JOE: Because I heard it once myself.

(*Betsy sits beside him at the table.*)

BETSY: Where? Perhaps, if you will tell me, it will help me to remember.

JOE: I heard the song once when I was a lad—when I was taken on a visit.

BETSY: Were your parents pirates?

JOE: It was a long journey and all day we bumped upon the road, seeking an outlet from the tangled hills. Night overtook our weary horses and blew out the flaming candles in the west; and shadows were a blanket on the sleeping world. Toward midnight I was roused. We had come to the courtyard of a house—this house where I was taken on a visit.

BETSY: Was it like this, Joe—a cabin on a cliff?

JOE: I remember how the moon peeped around the corner to see who came so late knocking on the door. I remember—I remember—(*He stops abruptly*). Do you remember when you first came to live with Nancy?

BETSY: I dreamed once—you will think me silly—Are there great stone steps somewhere, wider than this room, with marble women standing motionless? And walls with dizzy towers upon them?

JOE: Go on, Betsy.

BETSY: In Clovelly there are naught but cabins pitched upon a hill, and ladders to a loft. And, at the foot of the town, a mole, where boats put in. And I have listened to the songs of the fishermen as they wind their nets. And through the window of the tavern I have heard them singing at their rum. And sometimes I have been afraid. I have stuffed my ears and ran. But the ugly songs have followed me and scared me in the night. The shadows from the moon have reeled across the floor, like a tipsy

sailor from the Harbor Light. Joe, are you really a man from the sea?

JOE: Why, Betsy?

BETSY: The sea is never gentle. It never sleeps. I have stood listening at the window on breathless nights, but the ocean always slaps against the rocks. Even in a calm it moves and frets. Is it not said that the ghosts of evil men walk back and forth on the spot where their crimes are done? The ocean, perhaps, for its cruel wreckage, haunts these cliffs. It is doomed through all eternity with a lather of breaking waves to wash these rocks of blood. And the wind whistles to bury the cries of drowning men that plague the memory. Joe—

JOE: Yes, my dear.

BETSY: You are the only one—Patch-Eye, Duke and the Captain—you are the only one who is always gentle. And I have wondered if you could really be a pirate.

JOE: Me? (*Then with sudden change.*) Me? Gentle? The devil himself is my softer twin.

BETSY: Don 't! Don 't!

JOE: What do you know of scuttled ships, and rascals ripped in fight? Of the last bubbles that grin upon the surface where a dozen men have drowned?

BETSY: Joe! For God's sake! Don 't!

JOE: Is it gentleness to plunge a dagger in a man and watch for his dying eye to glaze?

BETSY: It is a lie. Tell me it is a lie!

JOE: My dear. (*Gently he touches her hand.*)

BETSY: It is a lie.

JOE: We 'll pretend it is a lie.

(*They sit for a moment without speaking.*)

BETSY: How long, Joe, have you lived with us?

JOE: Two weeks, Betsy.

BETSY: Two weeks? So short a time. From Monday to Monday and then around again to Monday. It is so brief a space that a flower would scarcely droop and wither. And yet the day you came seems already long ago. And all the days before are of a different life. It was another Betsy, not myself, who lived in this cabin on a Sunday before a Monday.

"From Monday to Monday, and then around again to Monday"

JOE: It is so always, Betsy, when friends suddenly come to know each other. All other days sink to unreality like the memory of snow upon a day of August. We wonder how the flowering meadows were once a field of white. Our past selves, Betsy, walk apart from us and, although we know their trick of attitude and the fashion of their clothes, they are not ourselves. For friendship, when it grips the heart, rewinds the fibres of our being. Do you remember, dear, how you ran in fright when you first saw me clambering up these rocks?

BETSY: I was sent to call the Duke to dinner and

carried a bell to ring it on the cliff. I was afraid when a stranger's head appeared upon the path.

JOE: Yet, when I spoke, you stopped.

BETSY: At the first word I knew I need n't be afraid. And you took my hand to help me up the slope. You asked my name, and told me yours was Joe. Then we came together to this cabin. And each day I have been with you. Two weeks only.

JOE: I shall be gone, Betsy, in a little while.

BETSY: Gone?

JOE: I am not, my dear, the master of myself. We must forget these days together.

BETSY: Joe!

JOE: May be I shall return. Fate is captain. The future shows so vaguely in the mist. Listen! It is the Duke.

(*In the distance the Duke is heard singing the pirates' song.*)

JOE: We must speak of these things together. Another time when there is no interruption.

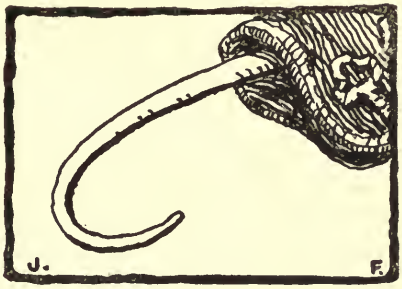
(*Gently she touches his fingers.*)

BETSY: I shall be lonely when you go.

(*There is loud stamping at the door. Betsy goes quickly to the kitchen.*

The Captain enters, followed by the Duke. Patch-Eye enters by way of the ladder. The Captain has a hook hand. This is the very hook mentioned in my preface—if you read prefaces—got from the corner butcher. The Captain would be a frightful man to meet socially. I can hear a host saying

"Shake hands with the Captain." One quite loses his taste for dinner parties. There is a sabre cut across the Captain's cheek. He is even more disreputable in appearance than his followers, with a bluster that marks his rank.)



The Captain would be a frightful man to meet socially

CAPTAIN: There 's news! There 's news, me men! I 've brought big news from the village.

(He wrings the water from his hat. He is provokingly deliberate. All of the pirates crowd around.)

CAPTAIN: By the bones of me ten fingers, it 's a blythe night fer our business. It 's wetter than a crocodile's nest. When I smells a fog, I feels good. I tastes it and is 'appy.

PATCH: What 's yer news, Captain?

CAPTAIN: News? Oh yes, the news. I 've jest hearn—I 've jest hearn—blast me rotten timbers! How can a man talk when he 's dry! A cup o' grog!

(Darlin' has slipped into the room in the excitement. Old custom anticipates his desire. She stands at his elbow with the cup, like a dirty Ganymede. The Captain drinks slowly.)

CAPTAIN: There 's big news, me hearties.

DUKE: What 's yer news, Captain? We asks yer.

CAPTAIN: I 'm telling' yer. It 's sweatin' with

curiosity that kills cats. (*He yawns and stretches his legs across the hob.*) Down in the village I learnt—I was jest takin' a drop o' rum at the Harbor Light. It 's not as sweet as Darlin's. They skimps their sugar. Yer wants ter keep droppin' it in as yer stirs it. I thinks they puts in too much water. Water 's not much good—'cept fer washin'. And washin' 's not much good.

DUKE: Now then, Captain, hold hard on yer tiller agin wobblin', and get ter port.

DARLIN': We 're hangin' on yer lips.

CAPTAIN: Yer need n't keep shovin' me. I kicks up when I 'm riled. They say down in the village—

(*It is now a sneeze that will not dislodge. He has hopes of it for a breathless moment, but it proves to be a dud.*)

CAPTAIN: There 's Petey—

PATCH: We 're jest fidgettin' fer the news.

CAPTAIN: The news? Oh, yes. Now yer hears it. (*He draws the pirates near.*) A great merchantman has jest sailed from Bristol. The Royal 'Arry. It 's her. With gold fer the armies in France. She 's a brig o' five hundred ton. This night, when the tide runs out, she slips away from Bristol harbor. With this wind she should be off Clovelly by this time termorrer night.

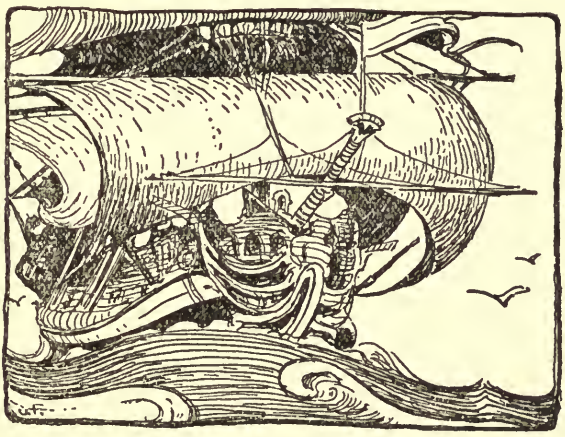
DARLIN': Glory ter God!

DUKE: And then Petey will douse his glim. And we 'll set up the ship's lantern.

PATCH: Smash!

DUKE: Then Petey will light hisself.

PATCH: And we 'll be jest as innercent as babies rockin' in a crib.



"The Royal 'Arry. It 's her."

DUKE: And lay it on the helmsman fer bein' sleepy.

CAPTAIN: And I 've other news. Down in the village they say—fer a fishin' sloop brought the word—that his 'Ighness, the Prince o' Wales, left London a month ago.

DUKE: And him not givin' me word. I calls that shabby. He was me fag at Eton.

PATCH: Does yer think, Captain, he 'll spend a week-end with us, ridin' to the 'ounds, jest tellin' us the London gossip—how the pretty Duchesses is cuttin' up?

DUKE: I thought he was settin' in Whitehall,

tryin' on crowns, so as ter get one that did n't scratch his ears.

CAPTAIN: They say he 's incarnito.

PATCH: What? Is it somethin' yer ketches like wollygogs in the stomich?

DUKE: Igerence. I 'm 'shamed o' yer, Patch. Ain 't yer been ter school? Ain 't yer done lessons on a slate? Ain 't yer been walloped so standin' 's been comfertabler. The Captain and me soils ourselves talkin' to yer. Incarnito is dressed up fancy, so as no one can know him.

DARLIN': Like Cindereller at the party.

DUKE: If yer wants Patch ter understand yer, Captain, yer has got to use leetle words as is still pullin' at their bottles.

DARLIN': When words grow big and has got beards they jest don 't say nothin' to Patch.

CAPTAIN: This here Prince o' Wales is journeyin' down Plymouth way.

DUKE: What 's that ter us? I 'm askin' yer. His 'Ighness cut me when I passed him in Piccadilly. The bloomin' swab! I pulled me hat, standin' in the gutter, but he jest seemed ter smell somethin'.

PATCH: It were n't roses, I 'm tellin' yer.

CAPTAIN: Silence! They say he has sworn an oath to break up the pirate business on the coast.

PATCH: And let us starve? It 's unfeelin'.

DUKE: No pickin's on the beach?

JOE: I 'd like to catch him. I 'd slit his wizen.

DARLIN': I 'd put pizen in the pig I feeds him.

DUKE: I 'd nudge him off the cliff—jest like he were a sneakin' snooper.

CAPTAIN: Well, there 's yer news! I 'm dry. Darlin'! Some grog!

(*He crosses to the table and draws the pirates around him.*)

CAPTAIN: Here 's to the Royal 'Arry!

DUKE: And may the helmsman be wery sleepy!

DARLIN': And we as innercent as leetle pirates suckin' at their bottles!

ALL: The Royal 'Arry!

(*While the cups are still aloft there is a loud banging at the door. An old woman enters—old Meg. We have seen her but a minute since pass the windows. Perhaps she is as dirty as Darlin'. A sprig of mistletoe, even at the reckless New Year, would wither in despair. She is a gypsy in gorgeous skirt and shawl, and she wears gold earrings. Any well-instructed nurse-maid would huddle her children close if she heard her tapping up the street. Meg walks to the table. She sniffs audibly. It is grog—her weakness. She drinks the dregs of all three cups. She rubs her thrifty finger inside the rims and licks it for the precious drop. She opens her wallet and takes from it a fortune-teller's crystal.*)

MEG: I tells fortins, gentlemen. Would n't any o' yer like ter see the future? I sees what 's comin' in this here magic glass. I tells yer when ter set yer nets—and of rising storms. Has any o' yer a kind o'

hankerin' fer matrimony? I can tell yer if the lady be light or dark. It will cost yer only a sixpence.

CAPTAIN: Yer insults me. Fer better and fer worse is usual fer worse. Does yer think yer can anchor an ol' sea-dog like me to a kennel as is made fer landlubbery lap dogs? I 've deserted three wives. And that 's enough. More 's a hog.

(*He retires to the fireplace in disgust.*)

DARLIN': Husbands is nuisances, as I was tellin' the sea-captain, jest afore he cut his throat.

DUKE: Thank ye, ol' lady, I does n't need yer. When the ol' Duke is willin', he knows a leetle dear as will come flutterin' to his arms.

PATCH: What can yer do fer an ol' sailorman like me? I 'd like someone with curlin' locks, as can mix grog as good as Darlin's. And I likes roast pig—crackly, as Darlin' cooks it. (*He offers his hand.*) I has a leetle girl in mind, but she 's kinder holdin' off. What does yer see, dearie? Does yer hear any fiddles tunin' fer the nupshals? Is there a pretty lady waitin' fer a kiss?

MEG: I sees the ocean. And a ship. I sees inside the cabin o' that ship.

PATCH: Does yer see me as the captain o' that ship? Jest settin' easy, bawlin' orders—jest feedin' on plum duff.

MEG: I sees yer in irons.

PATCH: Mother o' goodness! Now yer done it!

MEG: I sees Wappin' wharf. I sees a gibbet. I sees—

"I sees a gibbet. I sees ——"

PATCH: Horrers!

MEG: I sees you swingin' on that gibbet—stretchin' with yer toes—swingin' in the wind.

PATCH: Yer makes me grog sour on me.

(*He goes to the rear of the cabin and looks disconsolately over the ocean.*)

MEG: (*as she looks in the glass*). I sees misfortin fer everyone here—'cept one—tragedy, the gibbet. Go not upon the sea until the moon has turned. Ha! Leetle glass, has yer more to show? Has yer any comfert? The light fades out. It is dark.

DUKE: Ain 't yer givin' us more 'n a sixpence worth o' misery? Yer gloom is sloppin' over the brim.

MEG: Ah! Here 's light agin at last. There 's a red streak across the dial. It drips! It 's blood!

CAPTAIN: Ain 't yer got any pretty picters in that glass?

PATCH: Graveyards are cheerfuller 'n gibbets.

MEG: Peace! I sees a man in a velvet cloak. It 's him that swings yer to a gibbet. It 's him that strangles yer till yer eyes is poppin'. That man avoid like a pizened snake.

CAPTAIN: Avoid? By the rotten bones o' Flint, if I meets that man in a velvet cloak I hooks out his eye.

DUKE: Captain, yer sweats yerself unnecessary. (*Slyly.*) Here 's Red Joe, ol' dear. Joe 's a spry young feller. He looks as if he might be hankerin' fer a wife. Hey, Darlin'?

DARLIN': He 's the kind as wampires makes their wictims.

(*With a laugh—but unwillingly—Joe holds out his hand.*)

MEG: (*as she looks in the glass her face brightens*). I sees a tall buildin' with gold spires. I hears a shout o' joy and I hears stately music, like what yer hears in Bartolmy Fair arter the Lord Mayor has made his speech. I sees a man in a silk cloak. He swaggers to the music. I sees—I sees—

(*She looks long in the glass and seems to see great and unexpected things. Her eyes are as wide as a child's at a tale of fairies. It is no less a moment—but how different!—than when Lady Bluebeard peeped in the forbidden door. Scarcely was Little Red Riding Hood more startled when she touched the strange bristles on her grandmother's chin. But Meg is not frightened. She smiles. She bends intently. She is about to speak. Then she sinks into the chair behind the table.*)

MEG: I sees—I sees—nothin'! The glass is blank!

CAPTAIN: Nothin'? Jest nothin' at all?

PATCH: Ain 't there no blood drippin'?

DARLIN': Ner gibbets?

CAPTAIN: Ner sailormen swingin' in the wind?

(*Old Meg is visibly affected by what she has seen. The Duke, with a suspicious glance at Red Joe, moves forward to look over her shoulder at the glass. Slyly she sees him. She pushes the crystal forward and it breaks upon the stones. Then she rises*

abruptly. She lifts a portentous finger. She advances to Red Joe.)

MEG: I sees danger fer yer, Joe. Who can tell whether it be death? 'T is beyond my magic. But beware a knife! Go not near the cliff! (*Then, in a lower tone.*) You will see me agin. And in your hour o' danger. When yer least expects it.

(*She is about to curtsy, but turns abruptly and leaves the cabin. Darlin', with shaken nerves, runs to bolt the door. There is silence except for the monotone of rain.*)

PATCH: Nice cheerful ol' lady, I says.

CAPTAIN: Yer can pipe the devil up, but she give me shivers.

JOE: For just a minute I thought some old lady had died and left me her money box.

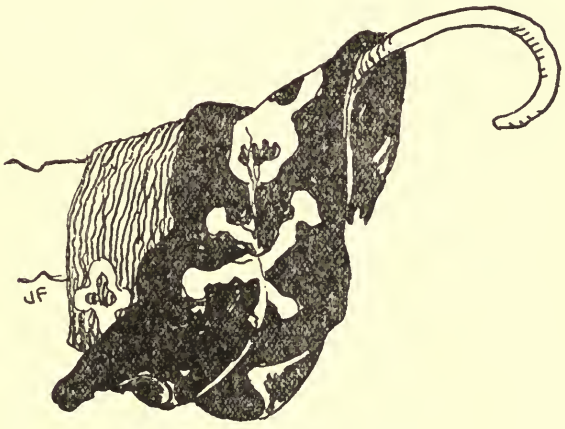
(*The Duke picks up a fragment of the crystal and puts it to his eye. He examines it at the candle, and turns it round and round. He makes nothing of it, and shakes his head.*)

PATCH: Yer can dim me gig that 's left, I 'm clean upset.

CAPTAIN: I ain 't been so down in the boots since the blessed angels took Flint ter 'ell.

DUKE: Captain, you and Patch is melancholier 'n funerals. Weepin' widders is jollier. Will yer let a hanted, thirsty, grog-eyed grand-daughter o' a blinkin' sea-serpent upset yer 'appy dispersitions? Stiffen yerself! Keep yer nose up, Captain! We has sea enough. We 're not thumpin' on the rocks.

CAPTAIN: Yer said it, Duke. I sulks unnecessary. There 's ol' Petey shinin' up there. Termorrer night, if the wind holds, we 'll see his starin' eye go out, and our lantern shinin' at t' other winder. (*He takes a pirate flag from his boot. He smoothes it with affection. Then he waves it on his hook.*) The crossbones as hung on the masthead o' the Spittin' Devil. Ol' Flint's wery flag. Him as they hanged on a gibbet on Wap-



"Ol' Flint's wery flag"

pin' wharf. It was a mirky night like this, with 'prentices gawpin' in the lanterns and Jack Ketch unsnarlin' his cursed ropes. I spits blood ter think o' it.

DUKE: I 'll die easy when I 've revenged his death and the ol' clock is tickin' peaceful and Flint sleepin' 'appy in his rotten coffin.

CAPTAIN: A drink all 'round. We 'll drink the

health o' this here flag. You 'll drink with us, Darlin'.

DARLIN': Yer spoils me, Captain.

(*Everyone drinks.*)

CAPTAIN: And now we 'll drink confusion to the swab that 's settin' on the English throne.

(*All drink except Red Joe. He makes the pretense, but pours his grog out covertly. Our play is nothing if not subtle.*)

DUKE: Here 's to ol' Flint!

ALL: Here 's to ol' Flint!

(*It is bed-time. They all stretch and yawn. The Captain climbs the ladder to the sleeping loft. Patch follows with the candle, warming the Captain's seat for speed. The Duke comes next, carrying his one boot which he has removed before the fire. Darlin' kisses her hand to the Duke and retires to the kitchen. We suspect that she curls up inside the sink, with a stewpan for a pillow. Red Joe lingers for a moment and stands gazing at the ocean.*)

JOE: My memory fumbles in the past. I, too, hear familiar voices—lost for many years. A dark curtain lifts and in the past I see myself a child. There are strange tunes in the wind tonight. Methinks they sing the name of Margaret.

(*He climbs the ladder. And now, with an occasional dropping boot, the pirates prepare for bed. Presently we hear the Duke up above, singing—vigorously at first, until drowsiness dulls the tune.*)

It is said in port by the sailor sort,
As they swig all night at their rum,
That a jolly grave is the ocean wave,
But a churchyard bell 's too glum.
I agrees ter this and ter give 'em bliss—
From Pew I learned the trick—
I push 'em wide o' the wessel's side
And poke 'em down with a stick.

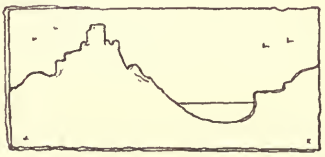
Darlin' warms her old red stockings

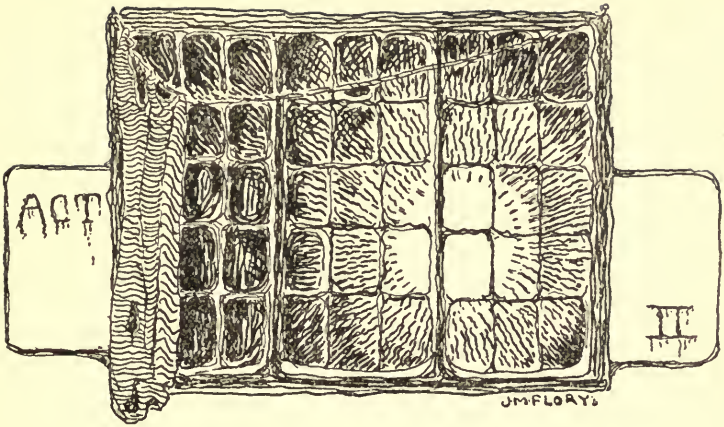
(*Darlin' enters. With a prodigious yawn she sits at the fire. She kicks off her slippers and warms her old red stockings. She comforts herself with grog and spits across the hearth. She sleeps and gently snores. The Duke continues with his song.*)

Ol' Flint had a fist and an iron wrist,
And he thumped on the nose, it is said,
Till a wictim's gore ran over the floor
And he rolled in the scuppers dead.
But, Patch, there 's a few, I 'm tellin' ter you,
Who 's nice and they hates a muss,
And a plank, I contend, is a tidier end.
No sweepin', nor scrapin', nor fuss.

Captain Kidd, when afloat, put the crew in a boat,
And he shoved 'em off fer to starve.
On a rock in the sea, says he ter me—on a rock
In the sea, says he ter me—on a rock—

(*The singer's voice fails. Sleep engulfs him. Silence! Then sounds of snoring. The range of Caucasus hath not noisier winds. Let 's draw the curtain on the tempest!*)





ACT II

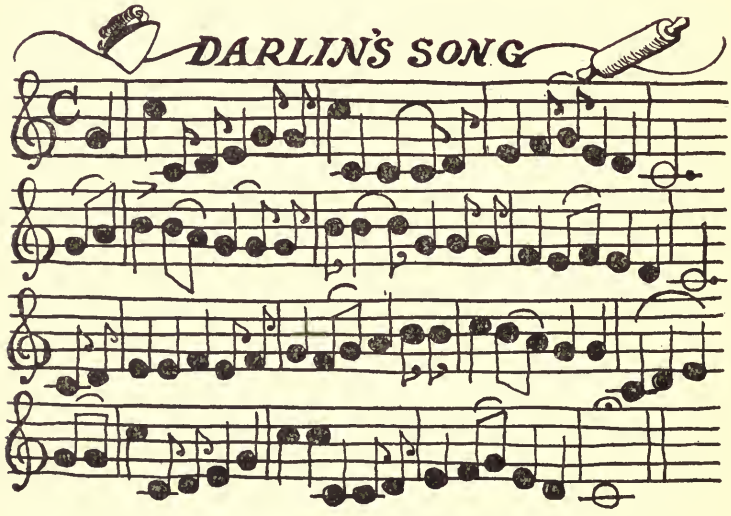
It is the same cabin on the following night. There is no thunder and lightning, but it is a dirty night of fog—as wet as a crocodile's nest—and you hear the water dripping from the trees. The Duke, evidently, has had an answer to his "Now I lay me." The lighthouse, as before, shows vaguely through the mist.

In this scene we had wished to have a moon. The Duke will need it presently in his courtship; for marvelously it sharpens a lover's oath. 'T is a silver spur to a halting wooer. Shrewd merchants, I am told, go so far as to consult the almanac when laying in their store of wedding fits; for a cloudy June throws Cupid off his aim. What cosmetic—what rouge or powder—so paints a beauty! If the moon were full twice within the month scarcely a bachelor would be left. I pray you, master car-

penter, hang me up a moon. But our plot has put its foot down. "Mirk," it says, "mirk and fog are best for our dirty business."

We had wished, also, to place one act of our piece on the deck of a pirate ship, rocking in a storm. Such high excitement is your right, for your payment at the door. It required but the stroke of a lazy pencil. But our plot has dealt stubbornly with us. We are still in the pirates' cabin in the fog.

We hear Darlin' singing in the kitchen, as the curtain rises.



Oh, I am the cook fer a pirate band
And food I never spoil.
Cabbage and such, it sure ain 't much,
Till I sets it on ter boil.

And I throws on salt and I throws on spice,
And the Duke, he says ter me,
Me Darlin', me pet, I 'm in yer debt,
And he sighs contentedlee.

(*There is a rattle of tinware. Patch-Eye sings the next stanza in the loft.*)

On the Strand, it 's true, I 'm tellin' ter you,
The Dukes and the Duchesses dwell.
And they dines in state on golden plate—
Eatin' and drinkin' like 'ell.
But I says ter you, and it 's perfectly true,
They stuffs theirselves too much;
And a mutton stew, when yer gets it through,
Is better than peacocks and such.

(*More tinware in the kitchen. And now Darlin' again!*)

I 've cooked in a brig to a dancin' jig
Which the sea kicks up in a blast.
And me stove 's slid 'round until I 've found
A rope ter make it fast.
But I braces me legs and the Duke, he begs
Fer puddin' with sweets on the side.
Me Darlin', it 's rough, and I likes yer duff.
I 'll marry yer, Darlin', me bride.

(*In her reckless joy at this dim possibility she overturns the dishpan. During the song the Duke's*

legs have appeared on the ladder. He descends, fetching with him a comb and mirror.

He brushes his hair. This is unusual and he finds a knot that is harder than any Gordian knot whatsoever. He smoothes and strokes his whiskers. He goes so far as to slap himself for dust. He puts a sprig of flowers—amazing!—in the front of his cloak. He practices a smile and gesture. He seems to speak. He claps his hand upon his heart. Ah, my dear sir, we have guessed your secret. The wind, as yet, blows from the south, but a pirate waits not upon the spring. His lover's oath pops out before the daffodil. I pray you, master carpenter, hang me up a moon.

"I pray you, master carpenter, hang me up a moon"

And now the Duke stands before us the King of smiles. His is the wooer's posture. He speaks, but not with his usual voice of command. Oberon, as it were, calls Titania to the woodland when stars are torch and candle to the sleeping world.)

DUKE: Betsy! Betsy!

(*She appears. The Duke wears a silly smile. But did not Bottom in an ass's head win the fairy princess? A moon, sweet sir! And now—suddenly!—the magic night dissolves into coarsest day.*)

DUKE: Would yer like ter be the Duchess?

(*This is abrupt and unusual, but nice customs curtsy to Dukes as well as Kings.*)

DUKE: I 'm askin' yer, Betsy. Yer ol' Duke is askin' yer. I 'm lovin' yer. Yer ol' Duke is lovin' yer. I 'll do the right thing by yer. I 'll marry yer. There! I 've said it. When yer married yer can jest set on a cushion without nothin' ter do—(*reflectively*) nothin' 'cept cookin' and washin' and darnin'. Does yer jump at me, Betsy?

(*I confess, myself, a mere man, unable to analyze Betsy's emotions. She stands staring at the Duke, as you or I might stare at a hippopotamus in the front hall. I have bitten my pencil to a pulp—the maker's name is quite gone—but I can think of no lines that are adequate. Her first surprise, however, turns to amusement.*)

DUKE: Ain 't yer a kind o' hankerin' fer me? Come ter me arms, sweetie, and confess yer blushin' love. I 'm askin' yer. I 'm askin' yer ter be the Duchess.

BETSY: But I do not love you, Duke.

(*In jest, however, the little rascal perches on his knee.*)

DUKE: Make yerself comfertable. Yer husband 's willin'. When I cramps, I shifts yer. Kiss me, when yer wants.

BETSY: You are an old goose.

DUKE: Did I hear yer? Does yer hold off fer me ter nag yer? The ol' Duke 's waitin' ter fold yer in his lovin' arms.

BETSY: I do not love you, Duke.

(*The Captain and Patch-Eye have thrust their heads*

through the opening above the ladder, and they listen with amusement.)

DUKE: I 'm blowed. I 'm a better man than Patch. I 'm tellin' yer. Is it me stump, Betsy? I has n't a hook hand like the Captain. Yer has got ter be linked all 'round. There 's no fun, I says, in bein' hugged by a one-armed man. Yer would be lop-sided in a week.

BETSY: It 's just that I do not love you, Duke.

DUKE: Yer wounds me feelin's. Does n't I ask yer pretty? Should I have waited fer a moon and took yer walkin'? And perched with yer on the rocks, with the ol' moon winkin' at yer, shovin' yer on? The Duke 's never been refused before. A number o' wery perticerler ladies, arter breakfast even, has jest come scamperin'. 'T ain 't Patch, is it Betsy? A pretty leetle girl would n't love a feller as has one eye. It ain 't the Captain. He ain 't no hand with the ladies. Yer not goin' ter tell me it 's Petey? I would n't want yer ter fall in love with a blinkin' light.

BETSY: You have lovely whiskers, Duke.

DUKE: Yer can pull one fer the locket that yer wears. Are yer makin' fun o' me?

BETSY: I would n't dare.

DUKE: Does yer mean it, Betsy? Are yer relentin'? Are yer goin' ter say the 'appy word as splices us from keel to topsail? Yer ain't jest a cruel syren are yer, wavin' me on, hopin' I 'll smash meself? Are yer winkin' at me like ol' Flint's lantern—

me thinkin' it 's love I see, shinin' in yer laughin' eyes?

BETSY: Why don't you marry Darlin'?

DUKE: Her with one tooth? Yer silly. I boohs at yer. Ol' ladies with one hoof inside a coffin does n't make good brides. Yer wants someone kinder gay and spry, as yer can pin flowers to.

BETSY: She loves you, Duke.

DUKE: Course she does. So does the ol' lady as keeps the tap at the Harbor Light, and one-eyed Pol as mops up the liquor that is spilt. And youngsters, too. A pretty leetle dear—jest a cozy armful—was winkin' at me yesterday—kinder givin' me the snuggle-up. I pities 'em. It 's their nater, God 'elp 'em, ter love me; but the ol' Duke is perticerler. Yer has lovely eyes, Betsy—blessed leetle mirrors where I sees Cupid playin'. They shines like the lights o' a friendly harbor.

BETSY: Darlin' cooks roast pig that crackles.

DUKE: I sets me heart on top me stomich. Ain 't yer comfertable, settin' on me knee? Shall I shift yer to me stump? Betsy, I calls arter we are married, fetch me down me slipper and lay it on the hearth ter warm. Yer husband 's home. And I tosses yer me boot, all mud fer cleanin'. And then yer passes the grog. And arter about the second cup I limbers up and kisses yer. And then yer sets upon me knee. It will be snug on winter evenin's when the blast is blowin'. And when we 're married yer can kiss me pretty near as often as yer please. And

I won 't deny as I won 't like it. The ol' Duke ain 't slingin' the permission 'round general. Darlin' nags me. What yer laughin' at?

BETSY: You silly old man!

DUKE: Yer riles me. Once and fer all, will yer marry me? I 'll not waste the night argyin' with yer. I 'm not goin' ter tease yer. I 've only one knee and it ain 't no bench fer gigglin' girls as pokes fun at their betters. I 'll jolt yer till yer teeth rattles. Is it someone else? Has yer a priory 'tachment? Red Joe? Is it Red Joe, Betsy? Is he snoopin' 'round?

(*Betsy rises with sobered mood, and walks away.*)

DUKE: There 's somethin' about that young feller I does n't like. He 's a snooper. Betsy, does yer get what I 'm talkin' about? I have offered ter make yer the Duchess. I 'll buy—I 'll steal yer a set o' red beads. I 'll give yer a sixpence—without no naggin'—every time yer goes ter town, jest ter spend reckless. I 'll marry yer. I 'll take yer ter Minehead and get the piousest parson in the town. Would yer like Darlin' fer a bridesmaid—and grog and angel-cake? Me jest settin' ready ter kiss yer every time yer passes it. I 'm blowed! You are wickeder than ol' Flint's lantern. It must be Red Joe. Him with the smirk! There 's a young feller 'round here, Betsy, as wants ter look out fer his wizen.

(*But Betsy has run in panic to the kitchen.*)

DUKE: I does n't understand 'em. I 'm thinkin'

the girl 's a fool. A ninny I calls her. It 's Red Joe. Off a cliff! Yer said it, Darlin'. Off a cliff!

(*He removes the sprig of flowers and tosses it into the fire.*

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:—

He retires to the rear of the cabin and strokes the parrot's head. He jerks away his hand for fear of being nipped. The ungrateful world has turned against him.)

DUKE: Yer a spiteful bird. Yer as mean as women. Ninnies I calls 'em. It must ha' been the moon. I should ha' waited fer a moon.

(*He sits on the chest at the rear of the cabin and whittles a little ship. Women are a queer lot.*

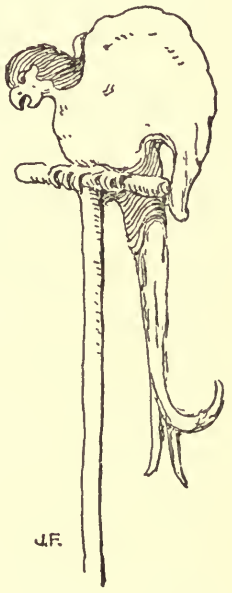
The Captain and Patch-Eye have climbed down the ladder. They burst with jest. The Captain sits on the chair by the fire, mimicing the posture of the Duke. Patch-Eye perches on his knee.)

PATCH: Darlin' loves yer, Duke.

CAPTAIN: Course she does. They all does. Youngsters, too—winkin' and givin' me the snuggle-up.

PATCH: Yer has lovely whiskers, Duke.

CAPTAIN: Yer can pull one, Betsy, fer the locket that yer wears.



"Yer as mean as women"

(*But the Duke ends the burlesque by upsetting the chair. The Captain and Patch-Eye, chuckling at their jest, sit to a game of cards. The Duke returns to the chest. Once in a while he lays down the ship and seems to be thinking. The broken crystal of the fortune-teller lies on the floor. He picks it up and puts it to his eye, as if the future may still show upon its face. He is preoccupied with his disappointment and his bitter thoughts. Darlin', meantime, is heard singing in the kitchen with her dishes.*)

Fer griddle cakes I 've a nimble wrist
And I tosses 'em 'igh on a spoon.
And the Duke and Patch yer can hardly match
Fer their breakfast they stretch till noon.
And I heaps the fire and I greases the iron,
And the Duke, he kisses me thumb.
Me Darlin', me dear, it 's perfectly clear
I 've lovin' yer better than rum.

Patch, also sings.

She 's cooked fer sailors worn down to the bone,
Till they rolls like the Captain's gig.
At soup and stew we are never through,
But our fav'rite dish is pig.
And she cuts off slabs and passes 'em 'round,
And the Duke, he takes her hand.
Me Darlin', me love, by the gods above,
Yer a cook fer a pirate band.

And now Darlin' again.

Me grog is the best. It is made o' rum,
And I stirs in sugar, too.
And a hogshead vast will hardly last
A merry evenin' through.
And I fills the cups till mornin' comes,
And the Duke, he talks like a loon.
Me Darlin', me life, will yer be me wife,
And elope by the light o' the moon.

(*Let all the tinware crash!*)

CAPTAIN: (*as he throws down his cards*). There! I done yer. Yer a child at cards, Patch. How ain 't it that yer never learnt? Did n't yer ever play black-ace at the Rusty Anchor down Greenwich way? Crack me hook, I 've played with ol' Flint hisself, settin' in the leetle back room. With somethin' wet and warmin' now and then, jest ter keep the stomich cozy. Never stopped till Phœbus's fiery eye looked in the winder.

"Did n't yer ever play Black-ace at the Rusty Anchor?"

PATCH: Poor ol' Flint! I never sees his clock up there but I drops a tear.

CAPTAIN: Yer cries as easy as a crocodile. And yer as innercent at cards as—as a baby bitin' at his coral, a cooin' leetle pirate.

PATCH: It 's frettin' does it, Captain.

CAPTAIN: What 's frettin' yer?

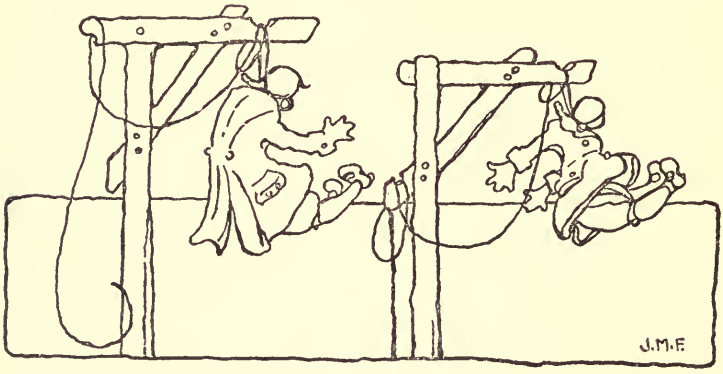
PATCH: It 's what the ol' lady said last night. She hung me ter a gibbet, jest like ol' Flint. There 's a

gibbet, Captain, on Wappin' wharf, jest 'round the corner from the Sailors' Rest. Does yer remember it, Captain? It makes yer grog belch on yer.

CAPTAIN: (*to tease and frighten Patch*). Aye. There was two sailormen hangin' there when I comes in a year ago.

PATCH: Horrers!

CAPTAIN: Jest swingin' in the wind, and tryin' ter get their toes down comfertable. (*He has hooked*



"Jest swingin' in the wind"

two empty mugs and he rocks them back and forth.) Jest reachin' with their footies ter ease theirselves.

PATCH: The ol' lady last night made me a wee bit creepy. Gibbets and Wappin' wharf ain 't nothin' ter talk about.

CAPTAIN: I never see a flock o' crows but I asks their pardon fer keepin' 'em waitin' fer their supper. Crows, Patch, is fond o' yer as yer are, without

neither sauce ner gravy—jest pickin' 'appy, soup ter nuts, at yer dry ol' bones. Here 's ol' Patch, they says, waitin' in the platter fer his 'ungry guests ter come.

PATCH: Me stomich 's turned keel up.

CAPTAIN: Patch, yer ain 't got spunk ter be a pirate. Yer as soft as Petey's pussycat.

PATCH: I ain 't, ain 't I? Was n't it me as nudged the Captain o' the Northern Star off his poop—when he were n't lookin'? Him with a pistol in his boot! Did n't I hit Bill, the bos'n, with a marlinespike—jest afore he woke up? Sweet dreams, I says, and I tapped him gentle. I got a lot o' spunk. Bill did n't wake up, he did n't. Was n't it me, Captain, that started that mutiny? Was n't it me? I 'm askin' yer.

CAPTAIN: Still braggin' o' that ol' time. It was more 'n four years ago. What yer done since? Jest loadin' yer stomich—jest gruntin' and wallerin' in the trough—jest braggin'.

PATCH: I ain 't 'fraid o' nothin'—'cept a gibbet. (*For a moment the ugly word sticks in his gullet.*) But the ol' lady kinder got me. Yer looked down yer nose yerself, Captain—askin' yer pardon.

CAPTAIN: Struck me, Patch, she was jest a wee bit flustered by Red Joe. Did yer notice how she sat and looked at the glass? And would n't say nothin'? Jest nothin' at all.

PATCH: And then the ol' dear's fingers slipped and the glass was broke.

CAPTAIN: It looks almost as if she done it a purpose.

(*The Duke has been thinking all of this time with necessary contortions of the face. It is amazing how these help on a knotty problem.*)

DUKE: Course she done it a purpose. It was ter stop me lookin' 'cross her shoulder in the glass.

CAPTAIN: What does yer think she saw?

PATCH: Was it blood drippin'?

DUKE: I 'll tell yer. I 'll tell yer.

(*But he continues whittling.*)

CAPTAIN: Well, ain 't we listenin', Duke?

PATCH: Jest strainin' our ears.

DUKE: I 'll tell yer. I squinted in the glass, meself, arter it was broke.

CAPTAIN and PATCH: What did yer see?

(*There is intense silence. The Duke comes forward to the table. He taps his fingers sagely. He looks mysteriously at his fellow pirates. They put their heads together. The Duke sinks his voice. In such posture and accent was the gunpowder plot hatched out.*)

DUKE: Nothin'! Jest nothin'!

(*The strain is over. They relax.*)

CAPTAIN: The Duke, he jest seen nothin'.

PATCH: Jest nothin' at all.

DUKE: That 's what gets me. If the *ol' lady* 'd seen nothin', she would n't took ter fidgettin'. And therefore she seen *somethin'*. Does yer foller? You, Captain? I 'spects nothin' from Patch.

PATCH: Yer hurts me feelin's, Duke.

DUKE: Somethin' 's wrong. Somethin' 's wrong with Red Joe.

PATCH: Red Joe 's a right smart feller, I says.

CAPTAIN: He can shoot as straight as ol' Flint. Barin' meself, Joe 's as straight a shot as I 've seen in many a year. Patch, agin him, is jest a crooked stick.

"I 'spects nothin' from Patch"

PATCH: Pick on the Duke jest once, why does n't yer?

DUKE: Ease off, mates! Red Joe ain 't goin' ter hang on no gibbet. 'Cause why? 'Cause I 'm tellin' yer. I 'll tell yer what the ol' lady seen in the glass.

(*Once more the Duke draws the pirates around him. He is Guy Faux and the wicked Bothwell rolled together.*)

CAPTAIN: We 're listenin', Duke.

PATCH: Like kittens at a mouse-hole.

DUKE: Captain, it 's deuced strange that Red Joe's ship—nary a stick o' her—never come ter shore. Does yer remember a wreck 'long here where nothin' washed ter shore?

CAPTAIN: Yer right, Duke. I never did.

DUKE: Does you remember one, stoopid?

PATCH: I does n't remember one this minute, Duke.

DUKE: Ol' Flint, he had a pigtail, did n't he? And you 've a pigtail, Captain, has n't yer? And Patch-Eye, he 's got what he calls a pigtail.

CAPTAIN: Spinach, I calls it.

DUKE: And ol' Pew, he 'd got a pigtail, ain 't he? And every blessed man as sailed with him. I 'm tellin' yer, Captain.

PATCH: The sea-cook, he did n't have one.

DUKE: Sea-cooks ain 't sailormen. They 're swabs. Jest indoor swabs. Did yer ever see a pirate snipped all 'round like a landlubber, with nary a whisp behind?

CAPTAIN: Yer can rot me keel, Duke, I never did.

PATCH: I agrees with the Captain.

DUKE: Red Joe, he ain 't got a pigtail.

CAPTAIN: No more he ain 't.

PATCH: Was n't it Noah, Captain; as got his pigtail cut by some designin' woman? Does yer think Red Joe 's gone and met a schemin' wixen?

CAPTAIN: I scorns yer igerence. Yer thinks o' Jonah.

DUKE: Well? Well? I 've told yer Red Joe ain 't got a pigtail. Does n't yer smell anythin'?

CAPTAIN: (*as he turns his head and sniffs audibly*). I can 't say as I sniffs nothin'—leastways, nothin' perticerler. I smells a bit o' grog, perhaps.

PATCH: I gets a whiff o' garlic from the kitchen.

DUKE: The two o' yer never can smell nothin' when there 's garlic or grog around. I 'm askin' yer pardon, Captain. Does Red Joe talk like a pirate?

Sink me, he can 't rip an oath. Did yer ever know a pirate which could n't talk fluent?

CAPTAIN: What 's bitin' yer, Duke?

DUKE: Ain 't I tellin' yer?

CAPTAIN: Ain 't we listenin'?

PATCH: Jest hangin' on yer tongue?

DUKE: Captain, you and me and Patch has seen a heap o' sights. We knows the ocean. We knows her when she 's blue and when she 's kickin' 'igher than a gallow's tree.

CAPTAIN: We has been ter Virginy.

PATCH: We has traded slaves at the Barbadoes.

DUKE: And does n't we set around o' nights and swap the sights we seen—mermaids and sea-serpents and such? Did yer jest once ever hear Red Joe tell what he 's seen? Yer can sink me stern up with all lights burnin', if I think the feller 's ever been beyond the Isle o' Dogs.

CAPTAIN: What 's bitin' yer, Duke?

DUKE: It 's jest this. Red Joe ain 't no pirate. He 's a landlubber.

(*He says this as you or I might call a man a snake.*)

CAPTAIN: (*And now a great light comes to him. He is proud of his swift perception. He leans across the table to share his secret with Patch.*) I seem ter get what Duke means. He 's hintin', Patch, that Red Joe ain 't a pirate.

PATCH: If he ain 't a pirate, what is he? I asks yer that.

DUKE: (*as he brings down his fist for emphasis*). He 's a bloomin' spy.

CAPTAIN: A spy! (*He gives a long-drawn whistle as the truth breaks on him.*)

PATCH: If I thought he was a spy, I 'd ketch him right here with me dirk. I hates spies worse 'n empty bottles.

CAPTAIN: I 'd scrape him with me hook.

DUKE: I 've been thinkin', Captain, while you and Patch has been amusin' yerselves. Askin' yer pardon, Captain, but cards rots the mind. Did yer ever know a pirate that ain 't drunk at the Port Light on Wappin' wharf?

CAPTAIN: Not as yet I never did. I never knowed a pirate as did n't have a double-barreled nose fer grog.

DUKE: Well, when Red Joe comes in, we 'll jest ask him. And we 'll ask him if he ever played black-ace at the Rusty Anchor.

CAPTAIN: It ain 't no night ter have spies about. With the Royal 'Arry comin' on so pretty.

PATCH: And jest gettin' ready ter smash hisself.

DUKE: That innercent ship will be due in less 'n half an hour.

CAPTAIN: If Red Joe is a spy, by the fiery beard o' Satan, I 'm tellin' yer that dead men tell no tales. (*He lifts the terrible hook and claws the air.*)

DUKE: Askin' yer pardon, Captain, bein' as it was me as smelled him out, won 't yer let me slit his wizen? I does it pretty, without mussin' up the

"I 'd scrape him with me hook"

cabin. I ain 't askin' favors often, Captain. And I 've 'ticerler reasons—reasons as touches me heart. (*For a moment he is almost sentimental.*) Reasons as touches me heart! Red Joe 's been snoopin'.

CAPTAIN: I loves yer, Duke. There ain 't much as I won 't let yer have. And jest ter show yer that I 'm all cut up by this here snoopin', when I 'm dead I 'll will yer this ol' hook o' mine, as has scraped a hundred men.

DUKE: Yer honors me, Captain. And if I is shoveled in first, me stump is yourn.

CAPTAIN: It 's handsome of yer, Duke. And I 'll not be jolly till a year is up—jest like a widder.

DUKE: Yer touches me. I 'll tie a black ribbon on yer hook.

(*At this pathetic moment Darlin' is heard singing in the kitchen.*)

And I fills the cups till mornin' comes,
And the Duke, he talks like a loon.
Me Darlin', me life, will yer be me wife,
And elope by the light o' the moon?

(*There is a stamping of boots outside. The pirates put their fingers on their lips. They are innocence itself. The Duke scratches the head of the parrot. The strange bird declines to taste his grog. Patch-Eye shuffles the cards. The Captain hooks the mugs toward him one by one for the last drops of their precious liquor. Red Joe enters. Also, Darlin' from the kitchen.*)

JOE: Hello, mates! Evening, Captain! Are n't you cozy! As peaceful as old ladies with their darning. I 've just come from seeing Petey, up at the lighthouse. Petey says that along in about fifteen minutes the Royal Harry will be showing around the cliff. Is n't it time, Captain, to set up the lantern where 's she 's useful?

DUKE: *Is n't* it? Did yer hear that, Captain? *Ain 't* it, is what Red Joe means.

CAPTAIN: Right yer are, Joey. We must be trottin'.

DUKE: What 's the name o' that tavern, Joe, at Wappin' wharf where we gets the uncommon grog?

JOE: Wappin' wharf? I 'm blessed if the name 's not gone from me. The grog 's nothing to Darling's.

DUKE: What does yer call the tavern on the Isle o' Dogs?

JOE: I 'm remembering the rum. What 's the use of looking at the signboard?

DUKE: How does yer sight ter turn the bar at Guinea?

JOE: Sorry, Duke. It was my watch below. I was snoring when we turned.

CAPTAIN: What happened to yer pigtail?

PATCH: Where does we ship the niggers?

DARLIN': Ain 't yer got a mermaid on yer chest?

(*The pirates have risen and come forward. Their questions are put faster and with insolence. Dirk and hook are drawn. Joe stands in an easy, careless attitude. He seems ignorant of danger. He*

has taken a coal from the fire and slowly, deliberately, with back to the menace, he lights his pipe. Then suddenly he drops it from his teeth. He leaps to action. He draws his knife—two knives, one for each hand. He kicks away a chair, for room. He drives the pirates across the cabin. The candle—all the mugs upon the table—rattle to the stones. He cries out with bravado.)

JOE: Who offers me his carcass first? What! Is pirate blood so thin and white?

(*The pirates stand with knives drawn. It is an awkward moment of social precedence.*

PATCH: (*safe in the farthest corner*). It's me patch, Captain. It 's fetched loose. I follers yer.

JOE: Come, Duke, and take your answer! Have you no stomach for my message? 'Fore God, is there no black ram to lead his sheep to the shearing?

(*Joe 's is a dangerous gayety. His two knives glisten in the candle light.*)

PATCH: Scrape him with yer hook, Captain, I follers yer.

JOE: My knife frets. It is thirsty for thick red wine. Who offers me his cask to tap? I 'll pledge the King, although it is a dirty vintage. Come, Captain, I 'll carve you to a dainty morsel. We 'll have fresh meat for the platter. You 'll not be known from scared rabbit-flesh.

(*He drives them around the table. Patch takes refuge behind the door. Darlin 's red stockings run up the ladder.*)

JOE: You bearded hound!

PATCH: He 's tauntin' yer, Captain. Hand him the hook! The Duke and me is back o' yer.

JOE: Do you fear to cheat the gibbet on Wapping wharf? A knife 's a sweeter end. Who comes first? I 'll help him across the Styx. Or sink or swim! Flint waits in hell for three whelps to join his crew.

PATCH: Captain, I 'm 'sprized at yer good nater. Scrape him one!

JOE: Who comes to the barber first? Cowards! I 'll ram your pigtails down your throats. I 'll wash your dirt in blood.

(*The Duke proves to be the strategist. He has edged to the rear of the cabin. He circles behind Red Joe. And now in a flash he leaps on him. Joe is buried under the three pirates, for Patch's valor returns when Joe is down. Joe is tied with ropes and fastened to an upright at the chimneyside. This is the terrible, glorious moment, now that the fight is over, when the actor-manager, as I first read the play—as explained in the preface (you really must read the preface)—turned his excited somersault down the carpet.*)

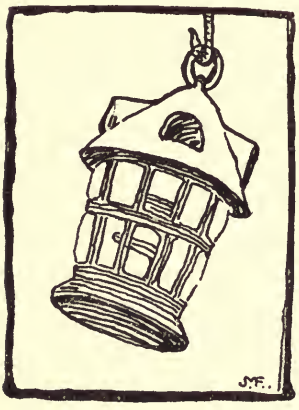
PATCH: Did yer notice, Captain, how I took him by the throat? He was squirmin' loose when I grabbed him. It was me tripped him.

DUKE: Captain, I asks yer a favor. Can I stick him now. Dead men tell no tales.

PATCH: Captain, yer jest makes a pet o' the Duke. Ain 't it my turn? I gets rusty.

DARLIN': Let the Duke do it. He has more reasons than Patch.

CAPTAIN: Lay off, me hearties! Does n't yer know we 're in a hurry? Red Joe 's kickin' up has wasted a heap o' time. The Royal 'Arry will be showin' 'round the cliff any minute now. Red Joe 's safe. He 's tied up double. We 'll have a merry party arterward—with grog and angel cake. It 's business afore pleasure. Here, Duke, take the lantern. (*He shakes it.*) It 's full o' ile. Jest stir yer timber stump, Duke. Yer can foller, Patch. Yer follers better 'n yer leads. Some folks is pussycats.



"It 's full o' ile"

DUKE: He 's pokin' fun at yer, ol' lion-heart.

PATCH: Yer hurts me feelin's.

DUKE: I 'll hurt yer in a fatter place—where yer sits—if yer does n't step along. Yer a yeller-livered, maggoty land fish. I curbs me tongue. I scorns yer worse 'n cow's milk. Go 'long, afore I loosens up and tells yer what yer are!

CAPTAIN: In about two minutes that blessed eye o' Petey will go out. We must set up the lantern afore the Royal 'Arry sticks her nose in sight.

DUKE: By by, Joey. See yer later, ol' angel cake. Yer has jest time ter say "Now I lay me."

CAPTAIN: How 's the night, Duke?

DUKE: Blacker than the Earl o' Hell's top-boots.

DARLIN': I 'll jest stick me apron on me head and go 'long, too. It ain 't proper fer a lady as has me temptin' beauty ter be left alone with snoopers.

(*The cabin is empty except for Red Joe. He strains at his cords, but is tied fast. You hear the voices of the pirates singing in the distance.*)

I agrees ter this and ter give 'em bliss—
From Pew I learned the trick—
I push 'em wide o' the wessel's side,
And poke 'em down with a stick.

(*As soon as the pirates have left the cabin Betsy enters. She sees Joe but passes him in fright. She runs to the window and shields her eyes to see into the darkness.*)

BETSY: God help the poor sailormen!

JOE: Betsy! Betsy! For the love of God!

(*Suddenly the lighthouse light vanishes. And almost at once the ship's lantern shows at the window to the left. All sounds are hushed.*)

BETSY: The ship 's in sight. I see her lights. She has rounded the farther cliff. I see her turning. She heads in from the sea. Her three masts are in line. She steers for the lantern. God have mercy! She 'll strike in another minute. (*She stuffs her ears and runs from the window.*) I can 't bear to listen. I can 't bear to look.

JOE: Betsy! Betsy! Do you hear? Margaret! Margaret!

(*At the sound of Margaret she lifts her head, buried in her arms. She runs toward Joe. Her wits seem dazed.*)

JOE: Quick! Margaret! Margaret! That knife! That knife on the stones! Margaret, cut me loose!

(*Still dazed, moving as if in a dream, Betsy picks up the knife. She cuts Joe's cords. Joe seizes the gun that leans against the clock. He takes deliberate aim through the window. He fires. The window glass is shattered. The ship's lantern is hit. The light vanishes. He replaces the gun. Betsy stands beside him, looking in his face.*)

BETSY: You 've hit it! Thank God! The light is shattered. (*Then, after a pause.*) I seem to remember now. My name is Margaret. I remember—

JOE: What do you remember?

BETSY: A great staircase—a room, with shadows from a candle. And when I was afraid, a lady sang to me. And she set the candle so that the fearful giant upon the wall ran off, and I was safe.

JOE: What else do you remember?

BETSY: I remember—

JOE: Margaret, do you remember me?

(*Margaret looks at him and a new memory is stirred.*)

BETSY: Yes, I remember you. Were you not a great tall lad whose crook'd elbow was level with my head? And once we climbed a tower—or do I recall a dream? You held me so that I might see the waves breaking on the rocks below. Then with level eyes we looked upon the sea, and cried out our discovery

of each glistening sail. Are these things real? One morning you mounted horse, and I was held aloft so that you might stoop and kiss me. You rode off with a clatter on the stones. You turned and waved your hat. And now you have come back. You are Hal. We were playmates once.

JOE: And by luck and God's help we shall be playmates once again.

(*He puts his arms around her and kisses her.*)

BETSY: Quick, Hal! You must escape. Quick! Before the pirates come. Follow the path to the village! You can escape by the Royal Harry.

(*They are running to the door when there is a sound of voices on the path outside. Joe has just time to put himself in the posture in which the pirates left him. The pirates and Darlin' enter in dejection. Betsy runs to the kitchen.*

CAPTAIN: Blast me, the lantern 's out!

PATCH: Rot me, but there were an explosion!

DARLIN': Poof! And there were n't no lantern!

DUKE: What done it? What done it? I asks yer.

(*They stand at the window and look toward the ocean.*)

DUKE: She is still headed on. Her nose is still pointin' toward the cliff.

CAPTAIN: What 's that?

DUKE: I hears the rattlin' o' chains. She 's droppin' anchor. She has sniffed the willainy. Her anchor 's down. She 's saved hisself. Blow me, she 's saved hisself.

CAPTAIN: Yer can hang me ter a gibbet.

PATCH: Yer can rot me bones.

DARLIN': Me heart 's gone palpy.

DUKE: What done it? What done it? I asks yer.

(*At this point let us hope that the curtain does not stick.*)

"What done it? I asks yer"

ACT III

The scene is the same as before. We have given up all hope of a pirate ship rocking on the sea. Our plot still twists us around its little finger. The curtain rises on the tableau of the second act. Old Petey shows again at the window to the right.

DUKE: What done it? What done it? I asks yer.

PATCH: Jest when everythin' was goin' pretty.

CAPTAIN: Jest when she was about ter hit.

DARLIN': Me heart near stopped—I was that excited.

(*The pirates sit in deep dejection.*)

DUKE: The mystery o' this business is how the blinkin' lantern went out.

CAPTAIN: Ol' Petey done his part.

PATCH: He doused herself in time.

CAPTAIN: It was the lantern done it.

DUKE: When there were n't no light at all, the

Royal 'Arry, she jest sniffed willainy and dropped anchor.

PATCH: I was repeatin' Smash yer devil! Smash yer devil!—kinder hurryin' her on.

DARLIN': I was sayin' Now I lay me—throbbin' with excitement.

DUKE: It was n't ile. I put ile in the lantern meself. Captain, yer seen me put in ile.

CAPTAIN: I seen yer. And I swished it meself ter be sure.

PATCH: Nothin's been right since that ol' lady hanged me ter a gibbet.

CAPTAIN: There we was watchin'—

PATCH: Pop!

CAPTAIN: And all of a sudden—quicker 'n seven devils—the bloomin' lantern went all ter pieces. It 's grog, I says. Snakes is next. It were a comfert to the ol' Captain ter know that all o' yer seen it. I seen a yeller rhinoceros once, runnin' along with purple mice—all alone I seen it—and it kinder sickened me o' rum.

PATCH: Does yer think the lantern exploded?

DUKE: Did yer ever hear o' a ship's lantern explodin'? I asks yer, Captain.

CAPTAIN: Yer talks silly, Patch. That lantern has hung fer twenty year on ol' Flint's ship—swingin' easy and contented all 'round the Horn—and it ain 't never exploded once.

DUKE: Swabs' lanterns explode, stoopid. Ships' lanterns don 't. Captain, I feels as mournful as when

Flint's clock did n't tick no more and we knowed he was took by the blessed angels.

CAPTAIN: I ain 't meself as gay as a cuckoo—not quite I ain 't.

PATCH: Ever since that ol' lady—

DUKE: Lay off on that ol' lady!

(*They sit in silence, in dejection. All stare stupidly at the floor. For a moment it seems as if nothing more will be said and the audience might as well go home. But presently the Duke sees something at the rear of the cabin. He looks as you or I would look if we saw a yellow elephant taking its after-dinner coffee in the sitting-room; but, as he is a pirate, he is not frightened—merely interested and intent. He brushes his hand before his eyes, to make sure it is no delusion—not grog or rum. Then he rises softly. He crosses to the window. Very gently he touches the glass. He finds it is really broken. He loosens a piece of the shattered glass. The others are sunk in such melancholy that they do not observe him.*

He gazes through the window, studying the direction of the broken ship's lantern. He traces the angle with his finger. The gesture ends with an accusing finger pointing at Red Joe. He whistles softly. For a moment his eye rests upon the gun, which leans against the clock. He has guessed the riddle. He advances casually, but with dirk in hand. He comes in front of Joe. Suddenly he presses the blade of his dirk against Joe's stomach.)

DUKE: Captain! Captain! Quick! Tie him up!

(*Joe is bound again with rope.*)

DUKE: It 's him that done it. It 's Red Joe.

CAPTAIN: How did he get loose?

DUKE: (*as he points to the knife on the floor*). Does yer see that knife? Does yer see Joe? I 'm tellin' yer. It was him shot out the lantern.

PATCH: Did n't I help ter tie him meself?

DUKE: Askin' yer pardon, Captain, but you and Patch has the brains o' a baby aligator. A stuffed rhinocopoterus is pos'-lutely nothin'. Askin' yer pardon fer speakin' so plain. I does all yer thinkin' for yer. There 's some folks settin' here as are fat-headed, and thinks ships' lanterns explode.

PATCH: Easy now, ol' dear. Yer alers pitchin' inter me, 'cause I 'm good-natered.

CAPTAIN: Red Joe, I calls yer a dirty spy. A swab! A landlubber! Fer one copper farthin' I 'd ketch yer one with this hook.

DUKE: It was me discovered him. I asks yer, Captain, ter leave Red Joe ter me. I hates him most perticerler.

(*Betsy enters from the kitchen.*)

BETSY: Did you call, Captain?

DARLIN': Nobody ain 't callin' yer, dearie. Now jest toddle back to the kitchen.

DUKE: This ain 't no place fer a leetle girl. It will give yer bad dreams. Mince pie 's nothin'.

(*Betsy attempts to leave the cabin by the door that leads to the cliffs—the door at the rear of the cabin.*)

DUKE: Where you goin', Betsy?

BETSY: I 've an errand in the village.

DUKE: Well, yer ain 't goin'. It ain 't no night fer a leetle girl ter be out. I ain 't goin' ter have me Duchess snifflin' with a cold. Go to grandma! It was me discovered him, Captain. I 'm askin' yer a favor. He 's a snooper.

PATCH: Captain, I gets rusty.

CAPTAIN: Lay off, me hearties. Duke! Patch! I loves both o' yer. I loves yer equal, like two mugs o' grog as is full alike. Yer can pitch dice ter see which does it.

(*He places the dice cup on the table beside the candle. The Duke and Patch take their places. Betsy, under cover of this centered interest, runs to Red Joe, who whispers to her.*)

DUKE: I drops 'em in me mug, so 's they can get a smell o' rum. The leetle bones is me friends. I never throws less 'n a five spot. I makes a pint o' shakin' the bones till they rattles jolly. I likes the sound o' it even better 'n the blessed scrapin' o' a spoon what 's stirrin' grog. Write it on me tombstone—if I rots ashore—He was the kinder feller as never throwed less 'n a five spot.

"The leetle bones is me friends"

CAPTAIN: Go 'long, Duke. Bones, as is kept waitin', sulks.

PATCH: One or three?

DUKE: One 's enough. I 'm talkin' to yer, bones. I wants sixes, sweeties.

(*As he throws Betsy jostles the candle with her arm. It overturns and falls. The cabin is dark. You can see her run from the cabin and pass the windows to the left.*)

DUKE: Now yer done it!

PATCH: You is all thumbs, Betsy.

CAPTAIN: Easy, mates! It were jest an accident. Betsy, fetch a seacoal from the hearth! Betsy! We ain't goin' ter wallop yer. Where are yer, Betsy?

DARLIN': Come out o' yer hidin'!

CAPTAIN: I 'll light the candle meself.

(*He takes it to the fire, lights it and returns to the table.*)

CAPTAIN: There yer are—blazin' like ol' Petey. Yer had better sit down, Betsy. Crack me stump, where is the girl?

PATCH: Kinder silly o' her ter run away. We ain 't never walloped her.

DUKE: Women 's silly folks. I calls 'em ninnies. It don 't do no good tryin' ter understand 'em. Now then, ol' lionheart, are yer ready? (*He throws.*) Two fives! I 've done yer, Patch.

(*It is Patch's turn. He kisses the cubes.*)

PATCH: Yer as sweet as honey. Tell me yer loves me. Me dirk is itchin' fer yer answer. Luck 's a lady as dotes on me. (*He throws.*) A pair o' sixes! Does yer see it, Duke? Stick yer blinkin' eye right

down agin the table! It 's me, Captain. (*He rises and draws his knife.*) Joey are yer ready?

JOE: God, if I were loose I 'd take you by the dirty gullet and twist it until you roared. I 'd kick you off my path like a snarling cur. Of what filth does nature sometimes compound a man! Shall a skunk walk two-legged to infect the air? Three cowards will hang on Wapping wharf before the month is up.

PATCH: Are n't meanin' us, are yer Joey?

JOE: And I 'll tell you more.

CAPTAIN: Ain 't we listenin' to yer? Yer can talk spry, as Patch here has a leetle job ter do, and it 's nearin' bed time.

DUKE: We does n't want ter sit up late and lose our beauty sleep jest listenin' to a speech.

JOE: A pirate takes his chance of death. You guard your dirty skins by wrecking ships upon the rocks. You dare not pit yourselves against a breathing victim. Like carrion-crows you sit to a vile and bloated banquet.

PATCH: Tip me the wink, Captain, when yer has heard enough.

JOE: Stand off, you whelp! The King of England fights in France—

DUKE: Ain 't yer 'shamed that you is not there ter help?

JOE: I 'll tell you why I am not in France. I swore to his majesty that I would clear his coast of pirates. My plans are made. The channel is swept

by gunboats. They will close in on you tomorrow—you and all the dirty vermin that befoul these cliffs.

DUKE: He talks so big, ye 'd think he was the King himself.

(*Everyone laughs at this. The Duke takes the cloak from the chest. In derision he hangs it across Red Joe 's shoulders.*)

DUKE: We 'll play ch'rades. Here 's yer costume, Joey. There! It fits yer like the skin o' a snake. We makes yer King. Yer looks like yer was paradin' in St. James's park, lampin' a Duchess.

PATCH: Does yer majesty need a new 'igh chancellor. I asks yer fer it. I wants a fine house in London town, runnin' ter the Strand, and peacocks struttin' in the garden.

CAPTAIN: King, I asks yer ter cast yer gig on me. I 'd be a right smart Archbishop o' Canterbury. Me whiskers is 'clesiastical.

DUKE: I offers meself, King, as Lord 'Igh Admiral o' the Navy. I swears fluent.

DARLIN': Has yer a Princess vacant? I lolls graceful on a throne. (*The horrid creature spits.*)

CAPTAIN: 'Vast there, me hearties! I 'm thinkin' I 'm hearin' the sound o' footsteps.

DUKE: (*to Patch*). Did yer lordship hear any sound?

PATCH: Askin' your Grice's pardon, I did n't ketch a thing. Did you hear anythin', Princess?

DARLIN': There 's nothin' come ter me pearly ears.

CAPTAIN: Silence! I wants ter listen.

(*No sound is heard.*)

CAPTAIN: Well, Patch, yer had better get yer dirk ready. I 'm uncommon sleepy. I wants ter get ter bed.

DARLIN': Ketch him a deep one, Patch.

PATCH: I takes it mighty kind o' you, Captain. Yer has alers been a lovin' father ter me. Joey, I 'll tell yer what yer are. Yer the kind o' feller I hates most perticerler. Yer a spy! Say yer prayers, you hissin' snake!

(*He sharpens his dirk and gayly tests it on his whiskers.*)

JOE: My wasted day is done. In the tempest's wrack the stars are dim and faith 's the only compass. Now or hereafter, what matters it? The sun will gild the meadows as of yesteryear. The moon will fee the world with silver coin. And all across the earth men will traffic on their little errands until nature calls them home. I am a stone cast in a windy pool where scarce a ripple shows. Life 's but a candle in the wind. Mine will not burn to socket.

DUKE: He 's all wound up like a clock—jest tickin' words.

CAPTAIN: Patch, Joe is tellin' us poetical that his wick has burned right down to the bottle. Yer had better put it out, without more hesitatin'.

(*And now, as they are intent for the coming blow—suddenly! quietly!—a woman's hand and arm—a claw, rather, with long, thin, shrivelled fingers—*

have come in sight at the window with the broken glass.

It quite terrifies me as I write. My pencil shakes. Old ladies will want to scream.

The fingers grope along the sill. They fumble on the wall. They stretch to reach the gun which stands beside the clock. Another inch and they will grasp it and Red Joe will be saved. The arm rubs against the pendulum of the clock. It swings and the clock starts to tick. And still no one has seen the terrible hand. And now the fingers are thrust blindly against the gun. It falls with a clatter on the stones. The hand and arm disappear. But Darlin' has seen the swinging pendulum and shrieks.)

DUKE: Does yer see it, Captain?

PATCH: Horrers!

DUKE: It 's never went since Flint was hanged.

CAPTAIN: And would n't run till his death 's revenged and him layin' peaceful in his coffin.

PATCH: Does yer think it 's grog? Does all o' yer see it?

DUKE: What done it?

(*From the distance is heard a long-drawn whistle.*)

CAPTAIN: What 's that?

PATCH: It makes me jumpy.

DUKE: It ain 't a night when folks whistles jest fer cows and such. Finish yer job, Patch.

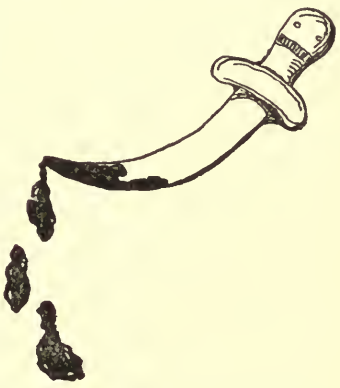
PATCH: Are yer feared o' somethin' special, Duke?

DUKE: Feared? If we ain 't quick, there 'll be a gibbet fer all o' us.

CAPTAIN: Ain 't the clock tickin' peaceful?

PATCH: She ain 't got no right ter tick. It 's like a dead man talkin'.

DUKE: Quick! Give me the knife! I 'll stick it in him. And when I 'm done, we scatters. There 's trouble brewin'. Termorrer night, when the tide is out, we meets at the holler cave. And may the devil lend a helpin' hand. Snooper, are yer ready? Does yer see this here blade shinin' in the candle? In about one minute I 'll be wipin' off a streak o' red upon me breeks. Flint—blessin' on yer gentle soul!—yer can rest in peace!



"I'll be wipin off a streak o' red upon me breeks"

(*He approaches Joe with upraised knife. Suddenly he cries out.*)

DUKE: It 's him the fortin-teller mentioned. It 's the man in a velvet cloak!

CAPTAIN: It 's him! Me God! Me hook!

(*With a growl of rage the pirates leap forward toward Joe, but are arrested by the sound of running feet. Into the cabin rushes the sailor captain, followed by three sailors. The sailor captain cries* "'Vast there!" *and the pirates turn to face his men. They*

put up a fight worthy of old Flint. Darlin', to escape the rough-and-tumble runs half way up the ladder. The table is overturned. The stools are kicked across the room. Even the precious grog is spilled. But the pirates' valor is insufficient. They are overpowered at last and tied. Red Joe's cords are cut. Into the cabin Betsy comes running, followed by old Meg.)

BETSY: Joe! Hal! Thank God, you are safe.

JOE: Margaret!

SAILOR CAPTAIN: I am the captain of the Royal Harry.

JOE: Captain, I charge you to arrest these men.

SAILOR CAPTAIN: Yes, your Royal Highness.

DUKE: Royal 'Ighness? Did yer hear what he said?

DARLIN': 'Ighness nothin'. He 's jest a snooper.

(*She sits on the floor, with her head on the Duke's knee. She is staunch to the last—a true cook for a pirates' band.*)

JOE: You will transport them in chains to London to wait their sentence by a court of law.

SAILOR CAPTAIN: Yes, your majesty.

JOE: You mistake me, Captain. My father is the King of England. I am but the Prince of Wales.

SAILOR CAPTAIN: Alas, sire, we bring you heavy news. Your Royal Father, the King of England, has been killed, fighting gloriously on the soil of France.

JOE: Bear with me. My grief has leaped the channel. My thought is a silent mourner at my

father's grave. Shall a King sink to the measure of a mound of turf for the tread of a peasant's foot? Where is now the ermine robe, the glistening crown, the harness of a fighting hour, the sceptre that marked the giddy office, the voice, the flashing eye that stirred a coward to bravery, the iron gauntlet shaking in the pallid face of France? All—all covered by a spadeful of country earth. Captain, has Calais fallen to our army's seige? Are the French lilies plucked for England's boutoniere?

SAILOR CAPTAIN: Calais has fallen.

JOE: Then God be praised even in this hard hour. By heaven's help I throw off the idle practice of my youth. The empty tricks and trivial habits of the careless years, I renounce them all. A wind has scoured the sullen clouds of youth. My past has been a ragged garment, stained with heedless hours. Tonight I cast it off, like a coat that is out at elbow. My father henceforth lives in me.

(*Meg, at her entrance, has sniffed the wasted grog. Her nose, surer than a hazel wand, inclines above the hearth. She bends to the lovely puddle. She employs and tastes her dripping finger—covertly, with mannerly regard to the Prince's rhetoric—sucking in secret his good health and happy returns, so to speak. The liquor warms her tongue—not to drunkenness, but to ease and comfort. The hearth-stone is her tavern chair.*)

MEG: (*not boisterously—with just a flip of her trickling finger, as if it were a foaming cup*). Hooray!

I wants ter be the first, yer Majesty, ter swear allegiance to yer throne. I saw yer future in the glass. Ol' Meg knowed yer, like she had rocked yer in the cradle. I told yer I would come in yer hour o' danger. It was me reached through the winder fer the gun ter save yer. It was me whistle that yer heard, dearie, hurryin' up the sailormen as Betsy went ter fetch.

JOE: Thanks my good woman. We grant you a pension for your love.

(*She quests back to her pool of grog. She finds a spoon. She sits to the delicious salvage, with back against the chimney and woolen legs out-stretched. Speeches to her are nothing now. We cannot expect her help in winding up our play. The burden falls on Joe. We must be patient through a sentimental page or two.*

JOE: Ha! My velvet cloak, which I left at Castle Crag when I laid aside the Prince and took disguise. These unintentioned ruffians by their dirty jest have clothed me to my office.

SAILOR CAPTAIN: I swear my allegiance, your Majesty.

JOE: I rely on my sailors to clear the coast and seas. But first I want your allegiance in another high concern. Some fourteen years ago, when I was a lad of ten, I journeyed with my royal father to the castle of the Duke of Cornwall, which stands high on the wind-swept coast. Its giddy towers rise sheer above the ocean until the very rooks nesting in the

battlements grow dizzy at the height. It is the outer bastion of the world, laughing to scorn the ocean's seige.

In that castle, Captain, there lived a little girl; and she and I romped the sounding corridors together. And once I led her to an open 'brasure in the steep-pitched wall, and held her so that she might see the waves curling on the rocks below. And tales of mermaids I invented, and shipwreck and treasure buried in the noisy caverns of the rock, where twice a day the greedy tide goes in and out to seek its fortune. And far afield we wandered and stood waist-deep in the golden meadows, until the weary twilight called us home.

And I remember, when tired with play, that her mother sang to us an old song, a lullaby. Her voice was soft, with a gentleness that only a mother knows who sits with drowsy children.

And to that little girl I was betrothed. It was sworn with oath and signature that some day I would marry her and that, when I became king of England in the revolving years, she would be its queen.

BETSY: By what miracle did you know me, Hal?

JOE: It was the song you sang. Your voice was the miracle that told the secret. With unvarnished speech I woo you. I love you, Margaret, and I ask you to be my wife.

MEG: (*faintly—floating in a golden sea of grog*) Hooray!

(*Joe takes Betsy in his arms and kisses her.*)

JOE: The magic of your lips, my dear, is the miracle that answers me. My loyal sailors, I present you. Margaret, Duchess of Cornwall, Countess of Devon, Princess of the Western Marches, by right and title possessor of all land 'twixt Exeter and Land's End. And now, by her consent and the grace of God, the wife of Harry, King of England.

CAPTAIN: Leetle Betsy, I fergives yer.

DUKE: I asks yer health, though I swings termorrer.

PATCH: And may yer live long and 'appy!

DARLIN': We 're lovin' yer, Betsy.

BETSY: My gracious lord, for these three years this cabin has been my home. These are my friends—the only friends I have ever known. They fed me when I had no food and they kept me warm against the cold. Must they hang? I ask you to pardon them.

DARLIN': Glory ter God!

JOE: The pardon is granted. Captain, strike off their irons!

DARLIN': We loves yer, Betsy.

CAPTAIN: We are fonder of yer than grog and singin' angels.

PATCH: I thanks yer, King.

DUKE: It were jest an hour ago, settin' in that chair, I asks ter splice yer, Betsy, keel ter topsail. The ol' Duke never thought the Countess of all them places, and the Queen o' England, ter boot, would ever be settin' on his knee, pullin' at his whiskers—him askin' her ter name the 'appy day.

BETSY: It was a prior attachment, Duke.

CAPTAIN: We 'll serve yer, King, like we served ol' Flint.

PATCH: Top and bottom, fore and aft.

DUKE: We 'll brag how the King o' England and us has drunk grog together, and how the Queen washed up the mugs.

MEG: (*in a whisper*). Hooray!

JOE: And now, Captain, lead the way. We must speed to London.

BETSY: Good by, Duke. Some day you will find a girl who cooks roast pig that crackles.

DUKE: A blessin', Betsy, on yer laughin' eyes!

CAPTAIN: A health ter King Hal and his blushin' bride!

ALL: King Hal! Leetle Betsy!

(*With a wave of the hand Joe departs, and with him, Betsy, who kisses her fingers to the pirates in farewell. The sailors follow. The pirates and Darlin' are left. The pirates sit at the table. They exchange glances of satisfaction. They unbutton for a quiet evening at home. Kings are but an episode in a pirate's life. They return to the happy routine of their lives. Our adventure has circled to its start.*)

PATCH: Darlin'! Me friend, the Duke, is thirsty. Yer had better mix another pot o' grog. Yer does n't want ter be a foolish virgin and get ketched without no grog.

DARLIN': (*at the fire*). Yer coddles yer stomich, Patch.

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Our candles have burned to socket. Our pasteboard cabin is bare and dark. No longer do pirate flags flaunt the ghostly seas. The stormy ocean, the dizzy cliffs of Devon, melt like an unsubstantial pageant. Let 's put away our toys—the timber leg, the patch, the frightful hook. Once again, despite the weary signpost of the years, we have run on the laughing avenues of childhood.

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